

"From Wonderland with Love" | By Peter Land, 2002

In her drawings *From Wonderland with Love*, Julie Nord quite obviously does not relate to a single, so-called "objective" reality, against the background of which her surreal ideas can evolve. In her drawings, one sketched reality merges into, cuts across or swallows up the previous one to make room for a third, which it then also erases.

These drawn metamorphoses thus tend towards contradicting, not to say undermining, themselves, in certain cases quite "literally", as in the drawing of the burning igloo. Or then there is the one in which the dictum "I'm not afraid of empty space" twists in and out of itself, almost completely covering the paper and thereby acquiring the quality of a mantra seeking to cancel itself out.

In other instances, the undermining element is built into the form of the drawings, as for instance in the forest picture which in a sequence of six images is eaten up by a fractal-like cloud until in the last drawing it ends up as a narrow frame surrounding the white expanse of the paper.

What strikes me in this respect about Julie Nord's present series of drawings is that many of them almost seem to devour themselves in a kind of internal cannibalism. Nothing is as it seems; everything is fluid and can be transmuted from drawing to drawing. The transformation is often effected in an individual drawing before we reach the next one.

In other drawings, the images place a question mark beside the artist's control over what she is presenting. Two drawings provide an instance of this. In one of them we see some hands making shadow pictures on a wall. These shadow pictures are of the kind we would normally expect in this situation: a rabbit, a dog etc. In the next drawing the same two hands are seen, but the shadow pictures on the wall at the back have taken on a life of their own and have now become monstrous and frightening. And down in the corner of the second of the drawings there are indeed the words: "It got totally out of hand".

From a superficial point of view it would be easy to read Julie Nord's *From Wonderland with Love* as a continuous process of questioning the conditions governing existence, a process taken to such a length that it begins to undermine any attempt at establishing a meaning. However, I am convinced that it would be a misconception to see Julie Nord's drawings as expressive of such a nihilistic view of the world. I am far more inclined to view them as recording how easy it is to fall down the "rabbit hole" and base our view of both ourselves and our surroundings on illusions.

The references in *From Wonderland with Love* are clear. The inspiration for the form and to a certain extent also the contents of the drawings are naturally taken from Lewis Carroll's stories *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*. The mere title of the sequence of drawings should make this clear. Julie Nord is not the first artist to have started out from *Alice in Wonderland*, and she will doubtless not be the last.

Nevertheless, it is particularly significant that Julie Nord has chosen precisely this story as the starting point for her drawings.

Lewis Carrol (pseudonym for Charles Lutwidge Dodgson) was Professor of Mathematics

and Logic at Oxford. As such, he wrote *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* especially for a little girl by the name of Alice Liddell whose background was that of the respectable English middle classes.

One of the interesting things when we read (perhaps re-read) *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* as a "grown up" is the fact that we suddenly discover the extent to which the author makes use of his mathematician's and logician's knowledge in his stories. Many of the most memorable scenes in *Alice in Wonderland* are due to his ability to turn logic upside down.

Lewis Carroll and Julie Nord have in common the quality of seeking temporarily to turn the world upside down, if for nothing else then simply to persuade us to view things slightly differently.