

Dazed and Confused, June 19th 2007

JULIE NORD Posted by: John-Paul Pryor

"For all the time spent in that room, the doll's house, darkness, old perfume and fairy stories held me high, on clouds of sunlight floating by" Matilda Mother – Pink Floyd
Syd Barrett's undoubted genius was due in part to the unmatched ability he possessed to evoke in his music a very real sense of the great lost arena of play that is the exclusive property of a young mind, and it is not hyperbole to say that the Danish artist Julie Nord achieves much the same in her illustration.

Any kind of prolonged exposure to Nord's work facilitates a trip to a place you once knew how to access a lot more instinctively, but it's by no means a fairy tale ride. By turns both sinister and appealing Nord's beguilingly apocalyptic illustrations provide a cosmic trigger for that unconscious and inherent aptitude we once all enjoyed as children; namely the ability to transport ourselves with immediacy to worlds that exist on an astral plane located somewhere between Tove Jansson's Moomin Valley and Jan Svankmeyer's twisted visions of Wonderland. Culturally Scandinavia contains vast and obvious mythological resources from which an artist can draw a mass of inspiration but Nord employs these folk infused notions of childhood and the past to question and unbalance our sense both of the future and perceived adulthood; lurking just beneath the surface of her surreal scenes you will find references to everything from Biotechnology to Armageddon.

Dazed Digital followed the artist down the rabbit hole to find out more...

What is the significance of the title of your first UK exhibition, 'An Afternoon at The Fringe?' 'Afternoon at the Fringe' at first sounds innocent, like a pretty afternoon in the garden, but 'The Fringe' part evokes an underlying disturbance. It can be a geographically placed fringe, the outskirts of a village or maybe the wastelands of suburbia... but it also refers to that knife-edged mental borderline between sane and insane, illusion and reality.

Literature seems to inform your practice, are there any specific works that have provided more inspiration for you than any others?

Lewis Carroll's Alice is of course obvious, but Edgar Allan Poe, Henry James and other gothic novelists have added some atmosphere to my works. I read a lot of crime and horror novels and I'm fascinated by the craftsmanship it takes to build suspense. I also read a lot about philosophy, psychiatry and religion, the aspect of 'Empty Space' in Tibetan Buddhism has been a huge source of inspiration for me.

There seem to be references in your work to a fairly dark future, what do you think the world will look like in thirty years?

I can't say really! It's already pretty damned dark out there but somehow I guess in the future it will be just as dark and light as it is now. Maybe it will be a lot darker in certain areas or around certain issues but then again I would like to believe that we'll be more compassionate in the future...

Do you have any particular favourites of all the creations in your bestiary?

I like hybrids between butterfly's and bats and girls with helicopter heads, and I really love Armadillos, with or without human heads, they're so 'not of this world'.

Would you ever consider illustrating a modern edition of Alice In Wonderland?

I don't think so, the original illustrations of Sir John Tenniel suit the story perfectly, also I like to think of my work as illustrating crucial moments in stories that don't exist, having neither a beginning or an end.

'Afternoon at The Fringe' 22 June – 22 July at The Houldsworth Gallery