

Rosa Loy's Beautiful, Befuddling Paintings at McClain Gallery

By Meredith Deliso



"Trost" by Rosa Loy

In describing Rosa Loy's work, artist Helmut Klärner writes that "the seemingly representational fails to explain itself." That does so well to describe the experience of looking at Loy's paintings that I couldn't help but quote it here.

Nearly 30 recent paintings and drawings by the German artist are on display at McClain Gallery in "Souvenir," her first exhibition in Texas. And while they all consist of recognizable objects, they don't add up to anything you've seen before.

Loy's work is often accompanied by the adjective "feminine," and it's easy to see why. The subjects of her paintings are all women -- long-haired women, short-haired women, dreaming women, mischievous women playing with fire, levitating women. Rosa also often puts her women in domestic settings -- houses appear frequently, including on the top of two flying women's shoulders in "*Saat des Schweigenssaat*."

Clearly, these are no ordinary women and no ordinary paintings. They seem to reference a specific folklore, each painting like a page out of a book, but it's one of Loy's own creation. She mischievously leaves us trying to craft our own meaning and narratives from these mysterious images and their names (titles like "Humility" and "Comfort" provide context clues). It feels like you're visually reading a book, one that's sometimes in a different language.

More important to Loy than the meaning of these narratives, however, is the form -- the color and composition of her paintings. And however strange, curious, or befuddling they are, they are still a pleasure to look at. Loy paints with the rarely used casein, a water-soluble paint derived from milk that gives her canvases a surprisingly traditional look. The colors are muted and soft, while at the same time incredibly rich. They are quite stunning to behold.



"Hoffnung" by Rosa Loy

"Rosa Loy: Souvenirs" at McClain Gallery, 2242 Richmond Avenue, runs now through March 2. For more information, call 713-520-9988 or visit www.mcclaingallery.com.