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BABES IN LOYLAND

by Charlie Finch

Since purchasing a small painting by Rosa Loy 18 months ago from dealer Tracy Williams, I have been itching to see Loy's first solo show in New York and her mythic exhibition, on view at David Zwirner through July 28, is a spiritual knockout.

What Loy, queen of the otherwise overrated and derivative Leipzig School, does is create a female mythology from the roots and vines of the Norse woods. Women in her work share dual personae as sprites and humans, communicating a knowing, always playful, sometimes sinister bond to the viewer, who feels mildly violated by this gaze.

Borrowing lines and hues from the Fauves, Rosa features variegations of one color in each large painting: orange women cooking (redolent of John Currin's famous Thanksgiving tableau), green snake handlers in a Matissean soup, two wenches almost French-kissing to a rockabilly beat. There is a sense of engagement excluding the male that is most enticing to a man and more so to a woman.

The drawing flows like acid on sandstone. There is none of the arch sculptural clumsiness that characterizes the paintings of Loy's spouse, Neo Rauch.

Rosa's painting of red witches lounging under falling feathers and blondes cutting each other's yellow hair are the most decadent, ripely charged, yet veiled eroticism since Balthus at his horny best. Rapier violence fills these women's cunning smiles, as eternity calls them home then thrust their spirits back up through the earth like willowy Eurydices, an eternal return that is female triumphant and female alone.

Perhaps we should call Mrs. Rauch, Mrs. Nietzsche!

Rosa Loy, "9 Wege," June 27-July 28, 2006, at David Zwirner, 525 West 19th Street, New York, N.Y. 10011.

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