

April 8, 2009

Suzanne McClelland, “Put Me in the Zoo”

★★★★★

Sue Scott Gallery, through Apr 18
(see Lower East Side)

By turns electric and radiant, the latest works of Suzanne McClelland emit an unbelievable amount of energy. Taking as point of departure a children’s book bearing the exhibition’s title, McClelland has rendered the story’s main character in a set of cartoonlike figurations that loop and curl in atmospheric fields of color.

Many of these works stand on the

razor’s edge between painting and drawing. The black arabesques hinting at the presence of a rounded snout in the composition have the gestural texture of crayon. A show of just pieces like this one would have been enough to ensure a resounding success.

Another group of works hung in Scott’s main room fleshes out a different set of concerns. The “Animal Trainer” series is more collage-oriented, combining screenprint with spray paint and a reproduction of a historical image showing Dan Rice,

the 19th-century entertainer who served as one of the models for Uncle Sam in the cartoons of Thomas Nast. A set of three exquisite small squares, titled *Wife No. 1* through *Wife No. 3*, offers glimmers of Lee Bontecou-like anthropomorphisms using a slightly more austere palette. Beyond the obvious pleasure in painting that is much in evidence here, McClelland takes chances, grounding her approach in a range of experiments that are nothing short of exuberant.

—T.J. Carlin



Blind Contour
(*Supine Spot*)