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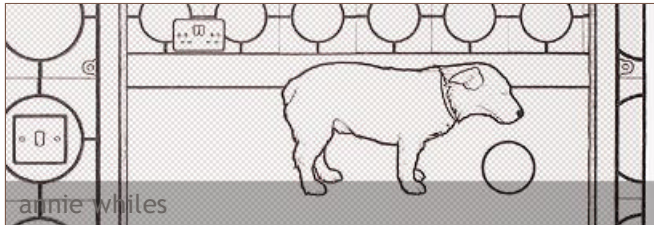
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Home from home at Danielle Arnaud.

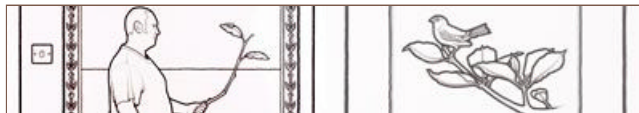
Can you make the ordinary extraordinary? It's something Annie Whiles explores in her latest exhibition, Cuckoo, at Danielle Arnaud's gallery slash home. The domestic interior of Arnaud's space perfectly fits with Whiles' drawings - the artist is fascinated with kitsch home banality.

Her schoolbook-style illustrations resemble Patrick Caulfield's paintings but drained of all colour. There's the same focus on two-dimensionality and everything is created with thick black lines. The objects that interest Whiles couldn't be more everyday or basic. These are domestic details - birds on plates, 70s side tables. The work creates an interesting contrast with the "real" domestic interior it sits in. Whiles asks why have an authentic table when you can hang an image where a table should be?



Pieces from Annie Whiles 'Cuckoo' in situ at Danielle Arnaud gallery.

In an era of DIY home improvement shows, it was only a matter of time before interiors themselves became art. Whiles plays around with representing a lot of traditional decorative media that have been thrown aside by Changing Rooms et al. The artist looked at cartoon approaches to creating embroideries and woodcarvings when she was developing her style and depicts wall plates, tapestries and stained glass. The objects in these images are consciously banal work. The atmosphere of empty suburbia is highlighted by the basic titles - Dog And Sockets, Table, Chairs And Cactus Bowl.



Nigel (detail), Magnolia (detail).

Whiles' world is filled with 70s-style plant pots, iconic chairs, metal-legged tables, sideboards. There's a real sense of anti-exoticism here; something particularly British about it all. It's not just a 70s suburban Britain. There's something medieval about a lot of the subject matter - a man holds a twig, updating medieval harvest scenes - with the focus on plants and animals as decorative motifs reflecting the medieval imagery of social control. There's also a nod to William Morris and the Arts & Crafts movement. Technically it's not jaw-dropping stuff, but if you like a semi-detached and retro chair you'll like this.

Francesca Gavin 22 March 07

The exhibition moves to Grundy Art Gallery, Blackpool, in June 07.

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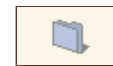
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