

Down the rabbit hole

Blue McRight renders a surreal tour of the 'burbs

By [Robert L. Pincus \(/staff/robert-pincus/\)](#) 12:01 a.m. Dec. 3, 2009



In “Morandi’s Lawn,” Blue McRight riffs on one of the Italian painter’s favored subjects.

Blue McRight shades her art toward the fantastical, be it in two dimensions or three, working large or small. The artist, well known in Los Angeles, has a solo exhibition at the University Art Gallery of San Diego State University, her first in San Diego,

On the large end of the spectrum, among the works in the aptly titled “Blue McRight: Elsewhere,” is a 1958 Mascot trailer by Holly Travel Coach of Holly, Mich. — you can walk inside it — transformed considerably. (It readily conjures up Andrea Zittel’s functional art trailers, but the motivation is different.) On the small end of things are many finely rendered pictures in oil on paper that exude a distinctively American quality. These handsome little pictures are often on the surreal side — in some cases, quirky, and in others, eerie. There’s a bit of David Lynch’s “Blue Velvet” world in them, though McRight isn’t as intermittently dark.

McRight’s uses of surrealism exude both affection and repulsion toward the suburban world she evokes. Lawns are tidy and frequent in her images, but curious things happen within them. Women get in wrestling matches; a man, seated out front of his house, is minus a head. A few pictures are affected, but more often than not they have a genuine dramatic tension.

The trailers in her pictures can be found parked in suburban settings, Others are on open roads or in wooded places.

McRight’s sculptural installations depart just as far from the everyday. There’s a sprawling arrangement of bottles and other vessels, neatly covered in artificial grass and arranged in a tidy half-circle (“Morandi’s Lawn”); and parts of two walls covered in rabbits and squirrels, made of cast resin and painted a luminescent red (“Swarm”). At first glance, these might seem merely clever. But the longer you look, the more they project a poetic charge. Some highlights are:

“Holly Mascott”: The artist took a relic of another era, a recreational trailer from a half-century ago and made it nonfunctional. If its interior seems out of kilter in other ways, that’s because part of its midsection was removed, You might feel a little like Lewis Carroll’s Alice when she eats the cookie that increases her size.

“Untitled (Frolic)”: Is the head on the human torso a costume? Or is a person undergoing a metamorphosis? It’s not entirely clear. What does seem certain is that this image is disquieting. It is also beautifully rendered.

“Untitled (Happy Camper)”: McRight’s trailer in the gallery may have something of an inviting fairy-tale quality to it. But as we all know, fairy tales often have a sinister dimension. This picture fits that description, with its ironic title and the lone head of a man staring back at you from one of its windows.

“Morandi’s Lawn”: Italian painter Giorgio Morandi made simple vessels and pots look marvelous and mysterious. McRight riffs in a large-scale way on his favored subject. with a geometric garden of recycled vessels. in many sizes and shapes. made green with a

