

EVE WOOD by Mary Anna Pomonis

Western Project, Los Angeles CA

February 9 - March 8, 2007

"No Other Word For Love," Eve Wood's second solo show at Western Project, consists of portraits of friends and family executed in her signature Alice Neel-y painting style (gouache and graphite on canvas). But against the reign of the trend in contemporary narrative painting, Wood's work is neither mocking nor intended as formal critique. The work transforms the photographs on which it is based into studies of dream states, rather like William Blake's illustrations of children in *Songs of Innocence and Experience*.

Even though these paintings cannot but commemorate specific individuals, they function at the same time as floating signifiers of desires immersed in the representations and repressions of childhood. For example, *Self-Portrait as Derelict Irish Boy* (all work 2007) shows an elfin Wood up against a bloody wall, a dove of peace nesting on her head. Either this is Wood as she sees herself, or—since the eyes are too piercingly hers to miss the point—it's the missing child inside us all, unapproachable to the very end. Etymologically every heir is an orphan, which is where we adoptees remain without the saving notion of chosen-ness. Hence Nietzsche/Zarathustra teaches that it is most difficult, simply, to be an heir.

Wood's characters stare, pout, cajole, and petition without artifice or pretense, with a brutal honesty that would be endearing if it weren't so rank. It's as if we were witness-



ing the birth of paintings at the same time as going through the therapeutic process of recalling how they got there. In *Lonewolf on the Prairie*, a kind of Tiny Tim meets *Déjeuner sur l'herbe*, the guitar strummer's bug eyes transmogrify into an iconic Medusa stare, unreflective other than in stone. What they instead bring to life is a doodly graphomania familiar to anyone who has drawn these same eyes while talking on the phone or daydreaming in class. Transparently, the little girl/artist is an androgynous stand-in for Wood herself and supposedly all that she sees of herself in her other friends, unstintingly childish yet infused with a devilish streak.