

The Other Side of the Rainbow

Karen Mahan at Gallery One, Loudoun County Government Center

January 8, 2024- February 8, 2024

Drawing from personal experience, memory, Celtic spirituality and animism, Karen Mahan's recent paintings explore the themes of displacement, a search for belonging, and exploring new lands that can feel topsy turvy and unsettling. Her prior 2 person show in March of 2023 with the artist Philippa Beardsley and curated by Emily Royer was titled "Meet us at Twilight" "transmuted everyday experiences into worlds full of mystery" and is an extension of that show.

It begins with "Departure" which is a painting about leaving one's life behind. In this instance, it is her mother who is suffering with primary progressive aphasia and whose memory has been fading. With the ribbons flying, and objects strewn about, and lanterns unlit, in essence it is sad but also celebratory as she leaves her old life behind. In "Into the Woods" a woman has entered into a new land where perspectives are skewed and you are left having to figure out for yourself what is going on in these woods. There are elements found in the painting that are only seen if you linger and spend time with it.

"Come to my Summer Field" invites you to come and sit and lay down in a soft field where summer is eternal. With knods to Lewis Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland" and the show "Stranger Things", "Entering the Upside Down" is a painting where the figure has jumped head first into the land below.

The miniature sculptures accompanying the paintings were all created after the paintings were made and most of the figurines are all objects that can be found in her paintings. With the use of sculpey as her material, it adds to a child-like quality to them and in some, the figures are all white. Have they been frozen in time, like memories?

Have a seat, spend time with the works, and see where your senses are lead.

~Karen Cecelia Mahan

December 2023