

On being subversive in your 80s: Evelyn Williams

Twenty-two strong, new paintings - all from 2010 – by Evelyn Williams at Martin Tinney show the octogenarian Welsh artist continuing the compelling and treacherous themes that have fired her imagination for decades. In a nutshell, which is how she presents them, they are loneliness, helplessness, fear of the void and of imprisonment, and the limitations of love. Her paintings have limpid colours, light tones blazing against velvety darks. Her drawing is funny, childlike and clean-cut, working against the hopelessness and chaos that threaten to engulf her – and us – when we stop to look inside ourselves.

Some of her pictures are reminiscent of Masaccio's frescoes. The sobriety of his work is there, but she is of our time not his, and her concerns cannot be solved by looking back. The surprise, pain and isolation in the faces of her people, the vulnerability of their naked and boneless-looking bodies, the pathetic openness of the simple landscapes with their stick-like trees, the doll-like quality of the girls who wear necklaces set against intricately patterned and pulsating backgrounds, are all of today and all the more powerful for being naively painted, by her at any rate.

Evelyn Williams introduces us to a world of dreams and nightmares, of childhood disappointments that endure long into adulthood. The majority of paintings on show (most measure 4ft x4 ft or more) are of people. The landscapes look like childhood memories. Her titles are enigmatic: The girl in a wood, A gathering, Tipped, Night bathing, Hallucination.

By confronting these horrors – the shoals of people like sardines perishing in a trawler's net, the faceless beings raising their arms in mechanical supplication to an unseen controller – she offers consolation, of a kind. Take nothing for granted. Go and see it.