

The New York Times: 'Genieve Figgis: 'Good Morning, Midnight' by Roberta Smith, October 23 2014

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Genieve Figgis's small acrylic paintings are nastily entertaining pieces of work. An Irish artist having her first solo in New York, Ms. Figgis favors rich colors that bubble, ooze and marleize as if alive. Her scenes are haunted by older art, vintage photographs or traditional, often distinctly Irish-English subjects (Georgian country houses inside and out), and frequently feature daffy but spectral creatures and leering ghouls with top hats and canes. The art conservationist's term "inherent vice" describes both the instability of the images and the general sense of the macabre.

Basically, paint degrades everything. The skirts of the women in "Ladies Picnic" have melted into a single creamy pool. The unsuspecting couple of "In a Boat" are about to be engulfed in a tsunami of white and lavender paint. The revelers in "Our First Party," set in a Georgian drawing room, appear to be monkeys wrestling in mud. And in a high-keyed version of Fragonard's "The Swing," the lavishly gowned lady seems to be a skeleton. She also might be under water.

Ms. Figgis's precedents are a motley crew that includes Goya, Karen Kilimnik and George Condo, as well as the "bad painting" genre of deliriously kitschy work featured at the New Museum in 1978. Some paintings are either too blatantly based on photographs or too dependent on their titles for comprehension. But the best consistently have the last laugh.