

HOLLY ANDRES: *THE RUBY RING*, 2008, C-PRINT, 24 BY 20 INCHES; AT QUALITY PICTURES.



PORTLAND
HOLLY ANDRES
 QUALITY PICTURES

Trained as a painter, Portland artist Holly Andres has found her true métier in photography and film. Her new photographic series, "Sparrow Lane" (2007-08), focuses entirely on four girls, shown doggedly sleuthing in the manner of Nancy Drew and her chums. Clad in party dresses or skirts and sweaters with white hose, these fair-haired friends explore a world of satin, lace and patterned wallpaper, pursuing obscure mysteries as they search a house upstairs and down. The 11 skillfully staged and manipulated images are eerily beautiful with vivid, saturated hues and hallucinogenic detail.

What secret does the house hold? That the enigma is a sexual one we surmise from Andres's playful symbolism in *Outside the Forbidden Bedroom*, where two girls open a locked door with the insertion of a golden key. With this artful cliché, Andres tips us to the allegorical significance of her story, and we hunt for deeper meanings. The girls' quest, we suspect, is ultimately for self-knowledge; like all children, they probably wonder "where do I come from?"

The bedroom, as the site of conception, may yield an answer to this question of origins. Once inside the chamber, a girl seated near a dressing table intently scissored open a velvet throw pillow as two others look on.

Curiosity about the maternal body is here metaphorically indulged, while outdoors two blondes kneel on the lawn to examine *The Golden Pillow*, its cottony insides exposed. The composition resembles a Nativity, in which Andres's youthful investigators ponder the miracle of birth. Pink blossoms litter the ground, hinting at the girls' waning springtime innocence.

In the basement, twins discover an empty bird cage. One aims a flashlight inside it; the other glances up, searching for *The Missing Bird*. Two cats lurking in the shadows, possible perps, escape their notice. It is a charming image of naiveté whose latent content—given the long-standing symbolic link between an empty birdcage and the loss of virginity—might involve sexual awakening. Upstairs, the girls explore wondrous cubbyholes and drawers—read womblike spaces—sometimes leaving hallways strewn with snippets of hair and the telltale scissors. Ladders and stairs recur, evoking Freud's interpretation of staircase dreams as scenes of sexual activity. Indeed, in *The Ruby Ring*, an older girl on a carpeted stairway studies the eponymous treasure, a symbol for the female genitals, while her younger sister gazes down from the landing above. Andres subtly and wittily acknowledges the possibility of such covert meanings with *Behind the Old Painting*, where the girls peek behind a framed portrait in the living room: similarly, beneath every

manifest scene in "Sparrow Lane" a secret content awaits curious viewers striving to uncover it.

ANDRES HAS WORK ON VIEW AT ROBERT MANN GALLERY, NEW YORK, THROUGH DEC. 6.

—Sue Taylor

PARIS
NICOLAS GUIET
 JEAN FOURNIER

Nicolas Guiet is a self-described painter whose work redefines the genre's conceptual frontiers. In a recent solo exhibition, enigmatically titled "fxfgxjghckgchkk," the young French artist continued his quest with savvy and conviction.

While a newcomer to his country's contemporary art circuit, Guiet has already made a name for himself with often voluminous three-dimensional abstract canvases designed to amplify or interrupt the architectural integrity of the spaces in which they are displayed. To produce these elaborate, usually monochromatic relief paintings, he first builds small models. (The exhibition featured two, *ieurazlsjfn* and *kxnhfkjwlcvn*, all works 2008.) He then constructs full-size versions, making stretchers that sometimes morph to compensate for mathematical miscalculations or the evolution of the artist's ideas. He wraps the undulating contours with taut cloth and paints the results in Pop-hued acrylics.

Each of Guiet's works is additionally