

frieze

Jasper Hagenaar

Jeanine Hofland Contemporary Art, Amsterdam, Netherlands

At first, the nine paintings in Jasper Hagenaar's recent solo show 'Haven' appear to be small windows to the secret worlds of their creator's imagination. The winner of the 2012 Royal Dutch Painting prize paints dreamlike scenes that lean toward surrealism yet can be slightly alarming: a shade of a single man falling (or is it hanging?) in *The Taxidermist* (all works 2012); a young boy wearing a Spiderman t-shirt but whose face is left outside the frame in *Spidey (Portrait of Jonas)*; taxidermied butterflies pinned on an off-white wall (*The Collector*); a white rabbit locked in a glass cage (*Lepus Timidus*); and a bouquet of flowers in the back of the space that look limp when viewed from up close (*Haven*).

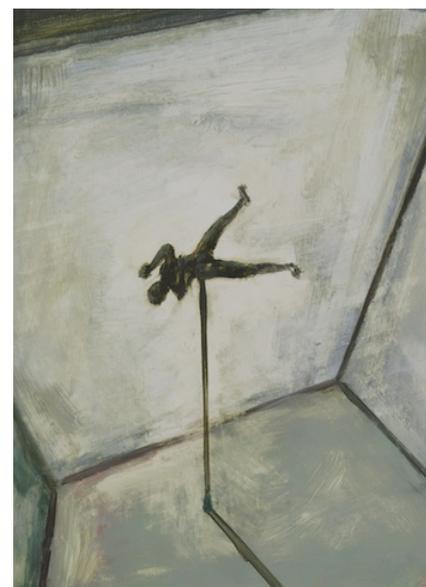
The latter work shares the show's title and exemplifies Hagenaar's work in this exhibition: nothing is what it seems, from afar at least. What looks like an innocent composition of pastel-coloured flowers from a distance actually resembles, on closer inspection, an image of desperation that is barely hanging on to its symbolic meaning. Hagenaar paints this emblematic figure of beauty with some flowers hanging face down with their dusty rose and pale yellow hues showing the first signs of ageing browns at the edges of their petals.

All of the paintings in the show are made with oil on paper, then pasted on panels. This technique contributes to the ephemerality of the scenes displayed; Hagenaar's brushstrokes are clearly visible, making up for compositions that seem to be covered by a thin veil. The pieces are evenly distributed throughout the space and all hung at eye level with plenty of space between them. This is exactly what they need, as each pictured scene seems to want to expand beyond the edges of its canvas. It's a smart and necessary choice to allow us to fully appreciate each work, the largest of which is barely 40 cm x 30 cm. The white walls not only act as large picture frames but also highlight the petiteness of the paintings and the lack of space that is provided for their protagonists; it is a clear articulation of the enclosed and sometimes suffocating environments that Hagenaar depicts.

About this review

Published on 18/01/13

By Judith Vrancken



The Taxidermist, 2012, oil on paper on panel, 38 x 28 cm

[Back to the main site](#)

However, each of these works also represents a productive space – a heterogeneous apparatus that lets a subject emerge and unfold in accordance with a specific distribution of time and space, be it the hollowing out of an imaginary time in the interstices of fiction in *The Encounter*, that shows two barely visible minuscule figures standing side by side with tall slightly curved high trees of an intimidating forest as a backdrop, or the freezing of temporality in *Remnant* in which colourful, thin paper garlands are dropping from the top of glass box, seemingly still bouncing from the fall. Sometimes manifesting the uncanny, the paintings function as spaces of evocation of memory – perhaps the artist's own. It's tempting to think that his imagined scenes come from a desire to turn ephemeral moments, memories and fantasies into a tangible present by giving them shape on paper. There is not necessarily one consensus in the experience of the works, although it is safe to say that a fundamental feeling of lack is shared in all of them, showing a consistent longing for something better, brighter and literally more spacious. However, 'Haven' successfully shows that it's possible to find beauty in the limitations of executing those desires.

Judith Vrancken

Frieze

3-4 Hardwick Street, London EC1R 4RB, 020 7833 7270