



## GALLERIES October 02

### JUNE CAREY

Bill Hare

Forgive this naïve question, but is the angelic presence still with us or have we become so mesmerised with mere passing reflections that we can no longer perceive what lies beneath the bright, flickering surface appearance of things? In the unenlightened past, angels were visibly and tangibly real to people; now they are only likely to be found on sentimental Christmas cards or in old movies, playing comic duos to the likes of Jimmy Stewart. As with the Native Americans, the angelic hosts have been put out to grass on their allotted reservations. Thankfully in the soaring imaginative world of painting it is still possible to glimpse a trace of their presence.

June Carey's paintings, like those of the religious artists of the past, have always been the domain of heavenly messengers with their disturbing otherness. Such subjects set their own challenges for the painter, who needs to persuade and convince, even in the age of deep materialistic scepticism. The central problem is how 'real' can the angelic appear to be? In Hugo van der Goes' Trinity Altarpiece for example, the two organ playing angels still have to obey the laws of earthly physics, one pumping the bellows so that the music, a disturbing collision and combination of the celestial and the mundane that also lies at the heart of Carey's work.

In her new show (**Castle Gallery** 5<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> October) Carey shows work in a range of different media, from paintings and prints to mixed media constructions, in order to present her elusive figures both as something tangibly convincing, but at the same time ethereal and enigmatic. These strangely androgynous figures appear calm yet are full of inner tensions and contradictions – sexually chaste yet physically alluring, fey and remote while at the same time intent on trying to communicate something of great import to the earthly viewer. What June Carey's mercurial messengers wish to announce to us is the enthralling mystery of the paintings. In the end we all have to look to and into ourselves to answer that question, but the candles which the angels carry might help to enlighten the darker corners of our hearts and modern dreams.