

# Soft-centred

Romance and nostalgia influence a series of striking new landscapes, discovers *Sarah Urwin Jones*

## ARTIST PROFILE

### JANICE McNAB

Doggerfisher,  
11 Gayfield Square, Edinburgh  
0131 558 7110

Tue-Fri 11am-6pm, Sat noon-5pm,  
or by appointment  
Until July 12

Think chocolate-box landscapes and you probably think of a rural idyll with a thatched cottage nestled in a valley, a horse nosing lazily over a rose-strewn garden wall. For Janice McNab, however, it is something altogether more subversive; literally depictions of landscapes formed from the plastic moulded interiors of chocolate boxes. The effect is stark, thought-provoking and amusing, and, with this latest development in a series which first surfaced in 2005, with a far greater emphasis on the "landscape" than the "chocolate box".

The thread of this series first suggested itself when McNab left Scotland in 2002



Janice McNab's *Green Are Our Valleys 2008*. Her abstract depictions of landscapes take only a squinting of the eyes to make them seem familiar

to live in Amsterdam. "I found myself thinking very nostalgically for the country I'd left, in a way I hadn't when I lived in Scotland. A yearning for the wild, romantic places."

But while it's still recognisably artificial, this first solo exhibition at Doggerfisher since 2001 is altogether less so than her early works, influenced by the landscapes of Western Scotland which she has been working on in between the two series.

"I've taken on the idea of the landscape, and retranslated it literally into a landscape of consumerism and products. We all bring different romantic visions to a landscape, our ideas of the past, and the whole Scottish Romantic thing. I have a nostalgia, living in Amsterdam, and I'm interested in working out exactly what that is."

The images of her work are bold and striking – some of the perforated forms

populated with small figures lost amid the endless rounded moulds, others suggesting landscapes that are almost, but not quite familiar, as if it would only take a squint of the eyes to bring recognition.

McNab was born in 1964 in Aberfeldy, studying at Glasgow School of Art, Hunter College for the Arts, New York, and Edinburgh College of Art.

Her move to Amsterdam came after meeting her partner in the city during a year-long Scottish Arts Council residency in 2000. "My main exhibiting base is still Britain and Belgium," she says "I don't have a gallery in Amsterdam yet, but there are differences in taste I think in all countries. Different education systems turn out different artists."

But if she does not yet exhibit influence on the art scene of Holland, Holland has influenced her work at Doggerfisher.

"The artificiality of the country definitely goes into my work," she says, with reference to her chocolate box paintings. "I'm constantly intrigued by Holland, by the North of the country and how it is so constructed and controlled every day.

"If they stop pumping the water, the whole landscape would be gone. Artificiality becomes the norm, it's an astonishing place." ■