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### Stick Like Glue

JESSICA WILLIAMS

SEP 24 - OCT 24

*by Ian Dolton-Thornton*

Jessica Williams has a show of seven paintings and a drawing at Important Projects in Oakland's Rockridge neighborhood. They're almost all vertical. All of the paintings are colorful and full of leaves, flowers, cloth, and bodies. They draw on Matisse, with greens and fuchsias in inch-long strokes that, in several of the works, suggest the shapes of clearings and interiors. The paint itself is layered, applied thinly in places and in some cases, wiped away. The result is a slow build-up that doesn't seem to strive for thick monumentality of paint; instead, pencil and wash show through.

In the show's sole drawing, *Self portrait (fragonard)* (2011), a girl lies in a bed surrounded by curtains, holding what might be a small dog, given the Fragonard reference. The painted version of the drawing, *Awake in dream (fragonard)* (2011), is the largest work. Once painted, what was a loosely drawn but clear figure sinks into a cloudy silhouette couched in firmer furnishings. The ostensible subject becomes the most purely suggested and least substantial element of a painting already staged with pictures of a frame, bows, and curtains.

These are girls' paintings; titles include *Girls club no.2* (2011), *Girls* (2011), and *two girls looking* (2011). Where identifiable, the represented subjects follow this pattern. Additionally, the way these paintings are made suggests a play on long-standing and often criticized conceptions of femininity. Many of the marks, such as the yellow bows around the edge of *Awake*, are ornamental. The works all seem to veil and adorn their subjects, softly playing with revealing the hidden. These curtains of paint, cloth, and trees are pulled back to reveal shadowy and elusive female forms. *two girls* presents the eponymous figures, lounging Katz-like through paint-as-venetian-blinds that allow viewers to see through. Rococo frills and soft brushstrokes seem to self-consciously reject expression and the modernist struggle for essence.

 Jessica Williams, *Hideaway*, 2011, Important Projects

*Hideaway*, 2011; oil on panel; 9 x 12 in. Courtesy of the Artist and Important Projects, Oakland, CA.

Due to the works' insistent subject matter and the gendered aspect of historical discourse on painting, it is difficult to move beyond this reading to one that is more dimensional than simply drawing upon traditional representations of femininity. *Girls*, the last painting in the show, epitomizes this dilemma. The paint is applied thickest here, finally pushing back at the viewer. It shows a picture of large door either advertising those toiling within or announcing the privileged few admitted to the club: GIRLS.

STICK LIKE GLUE IS ON VIEW AT [IMPORTANT PROJECTS](#), IN OAKLAND, THROUGH OCTOBER 24, 2011.

**Ian Dolton-Thornton** was born in Santa Cruz, California, and attended Bennington College.