

# Pinboard Wizard

The artist discusses fandom and zines, the DNA of painting and the rigour of craft, quodlibets and crime writing, porn and power.

Lucy McKenzie interviewed by Saim Demircan



Atelier E.B (Lucy McKenzie and Beca Lipscombe), *Faux Shop*, 2018, Museum Brandhorst, Munich

**Saim Demircan:** ‘Prime Suspect’ is your first mid-career survey and it brings together around 20 years of work for the first time. It is currently on show at the Museum Brandhorst in Munich – what is your association with Germany?

**Lucy McKenzie:** I spent three months in Karlsruhe as an Erasmus exchange student in 1997. During that time, I also went to the Rundgang at the Academy in Düsseldorf – which kind of blew my mind – and to Depeche Mode clubs in Berlin. It was my first time living away from Britain, and Germany was a really special place to experience as an art student.

**Then you went back to Dundee to finish studying?**

Yes. Actually, I intended to move to Berlin afterwards in 2001, but I was back in Scotland by April that same year. I’d read *Lanark* by Alistair Gray while I was there, which made me homesick for Glasgow.

I had made a lot of friends while in Germany, including the Academy Isotrope group of artists based in Hamburg. Indeed, my first show was at Galerie Nomadenoese (Nomad’s Oasis) – a little exhibition space that was about the size of a sauna at the back of the Golden Pudel Club, which sort of functioned as their headquarters. I think it was on for one night and I printed out photos as stickers and just stuck these to the walls. The photographs had been digitally manipulated, things like a municipal building with a Scottish banknote photoshopped in to make it look like a mural.

**You rehung 12 paintings from your 1999 degree show in one of the first rooms of the Brandhorst exhibition. What inspired this particular body of work?**

The time I spent in Germany was a discovery of a different attitude to painting compared with Scotland. My education up until then had been such a repudiation and rejection of all the kind of painting from the 1980s that had just completely gone out of fashion. The likes of Stephen Campbell or Adrian Wisniewski were washed away by this very clean conceptual art and rather dry painting that came out of Scotland afterwards. So, to realise that there was a whole other history and discourse was really great, especially, as I mentioned, going to the Academy in Düsseldorf. Even the way I presented my diploma show was inspired by seeing how the class of Markus Lüpertz, who was the rector of the school, hung their work together, salon-style. I found that very appealing, and wanted to do this as an individual to combine all these different interests and styles that I had at the time.

**You incorporated discarded abstract paintings made by other students into these works.**

Taking the paintings was just a kind of shorthand because I had no idea how to make abstract painting and some of the other students did it so well. But they didn’t want those paintings so it seemed like an economy of gesture to reuse them.