

# Flash Art

---

## MIE OLISE

BARBARA DAVIS - HOUSTON



MIE OLISE, *Taking Off Into the Sky*, 2009. Acrylic and polymer on canvas, 360 x 250 cm. Courtesy Barbara Davis, Houston.

In Aksel Sandemose's 1933 novel *A Fugitive Crosses his Tracks*, a small-minded town imposes laws against imagination and ambition. Mie Olise's second US solo show at Barbara Davis Gallery shares the novel's title but defies its prescribed limits. Subtitled "Departure," the young Dane's exhibition is brazen. Paintings and sculptures dramatically envision a narrative of escape and preservation. Each heroically-scaled canvas depicts a wooden ship flying through the sky or a house looming, poised on stilts. The sailless caravel of *Uplifted by New Enforcements* (2009) is propelled by three balloons,

while the junk boat of *Rowing in the Sky* (2009-10) sports tremendous oars. Ladders, wheels and diagonal horizons promise exits from unnamed threats.

Olise's masterful paint handling teeters each image between figuration and abstraction. Thin brushstrokes mark a patchwork of individual planks; paint splatters spill away from the underside of each depicted structure as if it is falling apart. Or melting. Olise's confectionary palette, with taffy-like aquamarine and pink highlights, evokes sweet dreaming.

The two objects offer a potential dose of reality. A mint-green shelf holds a jar of moldy chestnuts. A pile of a dozen six-by-twelve-foot wood stud frames makes a collapsed 'tunnel' or maybe one yet to be erected. The exhibition's similarly unresolved story, inspired by Sandemose's and Olise's venturesome biographies, is a sincere yet romantic myth - a pill not every viewer will choose to swallow.

*Kurt Mueller*