

Kayne Griffin Corcoran ARTFORUM

Critics' Picks: David Lynch



David Lynch, *Billy (and His Friends) Did Find Sally in the Tree*, 2018, mixed-media painting, 66 x 66 inches, 167.64 x 167.64 cm.
Image courtesy Kayne Griffin Corcoran and the artist. Photo credit: Robert Wedemeyer.

In 1906, the art critic, writer, and anarchist Félix Fénéon published a series of witty, epigrammatic three-line news stories in the Parisian newspaper *Le Matin*. These abbreviated reports, later published in English as *Novels in Three Lines* (2007), are striking in their capacity to convey vast, intricate plots with economy. The eleven mixed-media paintings in David Lynch's exhibition achieve a similar effect in their chimerical yet aesthetically reduced nature. Lynch pares down the outlandish sensationalism of his best-known work in film and television, presenting lone characters and strange creatures in monochromatic landscapes. Still, the scenes are unmistakably Lynchian, tinged with a surrealist, macabre, and often hallucinatory tone.

Scrawled captions lend a storybook quality to this body of work and ground the narrative arcs. The painting *I Was a Teenage Insect* (all works cited, 2018) depicts a single yellow smudge wearing jeans and a striped shirt, flanked by the outline of a small house and a white picket fence, below the titular refrain. *Billy (and His Friends) Did Find Sally in the Tree*, whose title is likewise inscribed on the canvas, features a figure with spindly antennae reaching for a knobby tree where a red-faced creature in crumpled garb is perched, screaming, arms outstretched in shock. A woman in blue, presumably Sally, has hanged herself from a branch. The narrative is at once clear, paranoid, and enigmatic. Franz Kafkawould undoubtedly approve of these domestic nightmares.

- Simone Krug