



PLATE TWENTY-SIX *Princess Sophia's Tears I*

*country home interior, Yorkshire, England* and *Ancestral Home, memories, Scotland, Near Inverness*. In both works on paper, Chandler manages to balance sheer decorative exuberance with a subtle and profound spirituality. Handsome portraits of estate "sporting" birds emerge from dazzling fields of floral decoration. These oddly reverent, pictures within pictures, inextricably mingle the realms of reality and fantasy, observation and invention. Their rich colors—smudgy palimpsest-like pale blues, grays and yellows—are seemingly both airy and sparkling. The drawing, at once soft and crackling, is energized by the swirling rhythms of arabesque and serpentine forms. Nature, of course, is always less threatening when pictured, objectified, reified. Here, Chandler not only aims to highlight the emptiness of our relation to nature, but also to reinvest it with content. At the same time, the individual portraits insist on a kind of self-determination that might be considered peculiarly human. Overall, the elegantly ornamented depictions offer a curious contrast to the mysteries they portray. Whereas Chandler embellishes and romanticizes the ordinary, she also holds these icons up to scrutiny: What is their real value? What

is their ultimate cost? Who or what remains inside or outside their parameters?

Throughout, we are moved by the sensual enjoyment of the materials themselves, from the way that ink spreads on paper to wiry strokes created with a narrow brush to the juicy amplitude of supple oils. The unhesitating speed at which her images appear to have been painted gives them an "unrehearsed" look that is integral to their success. Up close, the sinuous, squiggly and zig-zag strokes flow onto canvases in agitated rivulets that lick the surfaces in over-lapping, cake icing colors. At the core of Chandler's approach to the paintings and works on paper is the mark. Her curving, hatching, undulating marks can be seen as an attempt to preserve and embody a certain kind of physical motion. Brushwork ranges from the gestural sweep of a long contour to the skewed flick of a small detail. The paint is fluid, not dry, and has an edgy tactility. Each varying stroke maintains a purposeful distinctness. Expansive color strokes swell and drift into one another. Boldly brushed lines intersect, collide, or fill in and out of each scene creating surfaces of raw vitality. The tension between frivolity and seriousness is destabilizing. Her