

## Kissing Through a Bullet Hole: Alexandra Noel Travis Diehl

You could easily miss them, the flies—or mistake them for *only* flies, sunning on the glass, as flies do. In fact, *Two fly fishing flies cannot consummate through a BB bullet hole* (2019) is a tiny sculpture by Alexandra Noel. The title says it all: two faux, iridescent insects are attached face-to-face through a small round puncture in the front window of Potts gallery in Los Angeles. The flies are doubled, like the two B's in BB—mirrored, but complementary, seemingly attempting to mate. Noel mostly makes paintings—small ones, although not fly-small. The sculpture is an outlier in Noel's work, but also embodies the compressed drama of the rest: inert but tense, jewellike and precise, an erratum that's the rule.

Noel's paintings, too, are built around exceptional details. In *Plug* (2018), a buoy of caution-orange sinks into the dirt-red whorls of an ear, surrounded by meticulous fields of beard, the Army green of a cap and collar. A partisan at the firing range? An aging vet? The plug's orange seems to radiate through the cartilage, like the glow a Light and Space artwork leaves on the wall. Likewise, *Stigmata (Splinter)* (2018), a variation on the theme of penetration, renders the near-perfect puffs and calluses of the bottom of a foot, the exquisite grain of a sliver of wood, and the delicate translucency of its point beneath the skin. The canvas is small (24 × 34 cm) and full, racked in close with an almost psychedelic fixation.

Noel's attention to detail plays out thematically, too—sometimes in a trickling, fluid obsession, as with her recurring images of animals, vehicles, and domestic interiors. An early pair of diptychs feature Rococo bedroom sets (including one belonging to Jeff Koons), and the cascade of framed photos on the bedside tables in *Pull yourself together (New York)* (2015) themselves echo the scale of Noel's canvases. As much as their subject seems arbitrary, the paintings set up the reoccurrence of home decor and domesticity in later pieces. Noel's motifs resonate in other media, too; for example the painting *Riding Dad* (2020), a geometric diagram of a father and son playing horsey, provides the cover image and scenario for a short story published as an artist's book, *Ricky Rides Rick* (2020).<sup>1</sup> The bookmark that comes with it is printed with a pack of flies.

Lately, it's tornadoes. A couple of them appeared in Noel's contribution to *Made in L.A. 2020: a version* (2020–21), calling to each other across the exhibition's two venues, the Huntington Library and the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles. In one, *Giddy* (2020), the twister hangs in the jaundiced sky in almost erotic anticipation; the other, *Giddy Touchdown* (2020), depicts a consummation, complete with faint rainbow. Noel's most recent show at Antenna Space, Shanghai (2021), features a rush of storm paintings in increasingly abstract and surreal spaces, from the architectural skyscape braced by storm clouds in *Diaper Rash* (2021) to the barely possible scene in *Sprinkle* (2021), a funnel cloud descending from a clear, starry vault.

The forms and logic of painting also course through Noel's work from start to finish. There are ongoing self-reflexive jokes about her compressed canvases' gemlike appeal, such as a series of Neo-Geo compositions on beveled panels, like *Look at how big you are* (2018) (only 18 × 9 cm),

a magenta field edged in fuchsia and lilac. *Trinkets and Gems* (2016) depicts startlingly crisp necklaces and charms seeming to escape from an inlaid box. There are also several riffs on Peter Halley, ranging from more to less buried, from the plainly Halley-esque olive, orange, and sky-blue striped appliances in *Grease Trap* (2019) to the cell-like grate and tall chimney of *Coal Furnace* (2017). Noel even uses a version of his signature textured effect, for example in *Ice Cream Mountain Cake* (2021), which swaps Halley's municipal black bars for patches the color of tired gelato.

Still other pieces play with the catastrophic tropes of Christian iconography—the title of *Asking for a bug under a crucifix* (2020) turns a trio of outstretched black brush marks on a gauzy blue-gray field into a crucified punch line, while the carried-cross angle of the two mint-green beams in *Selling a home in winter* (2018) become a tale of subprime sacrifice, the realtor's sign lost somewhere between taken and knocked down. One could go on—a horse with a Futurist number of legs, an abstract canvas the size and color of a carton of Neapolitan ice cream—but suffice to say that even Noel's silliest pictures are grounded in a wry art historical fluency.

Above all, perhaps, Noel's many paintings share the underpinnings of visions, light forms in navy skies, and a distorted, mis-scaled anatomical symmetry. Some are more obvious than others. *Finding Armageddon at the Beach, 1998* (2019) evokes Agnes Pelton's theosophical symbology, including a rainbow horizon, a trippy corona, and a uterine, illuminated egg. From these mystic heights, Noel plunges back into the spunk. The punny *Demons Abreast* (2016) imagines the weird, flattened-out upper jaws of a dog, then a child, balanced as a pair of carnivorous chakras and gaping toward the round nipple at the canvas's bottom. In *Circumcision* (2020), the strong vertical symmetry follows a peeping glans in a bell of stretched peach skin, held apart by two looplike forceps into an ontic symbol on a midnight-blue ground—cosmic, mortal, the foreskin as womb.

Yes, paintings—in a way, it's not too much to think of them as little precious mysteries, still smudged with pigmented afterbirth. Indeed, *Baby Me* (2021) and *Y, a self-portrait* (2019) both render the same photo of a minutes-old infant (presumably the artist) with different framings; here, painting allows a sort of out-of-body pilgrimage to the artist's own beginning. It's a wild, splayed composition, the infant's purpled folds rubbed with medical gore, umbilical stub clamped closed. It is the endpoint of copulation, in a sense—certainly the end of gestation—and the beginning of consciousness and meaning making. The finished canvas is fresh, full, an articulated being unto itself, yet unresolved, taut with yearning, like two artificial flies kissing through a bullet hole.

<sup>1</sup> Alexandra Noel, *Ricky Rides Rick* (Paris: Holoholo, 2020).

105 Alexandra Noel, *Two fly fishing flies cannot consummate through a BB bullet hole*, 2019. Courtesy: the artist and Bodega, New York

106 107 Alexandra Noel, *Funny Looking* installation view at Antenna Space, Shanghai, 2021.

Courtesy: the artist; Antenna Space, Shanghai; Bodega, New York. Photo: Ling Weizheng

108 Alexandra Noel, *Plug*, 2018. Courtesy: the artist and Bodega, New York

109 Alexandra Noel, *Sprinkle*, 2021. Courtesy: the artist; Antenna Space, Shanghai; Bodega, New York. Photo: Paul Salveson



bodega

Travis Diehl, Mousse Magazine 76, Summer 2020



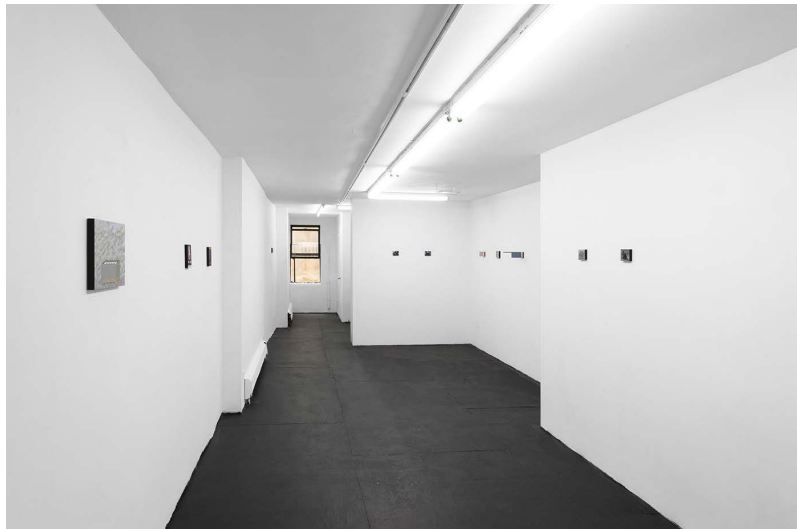


THE  
NEW YORKER

**Alexandra Noel**

The only unifying principle in this Los Angeles artist's paintings is size: they're all small, some a mere three by four inches. There is otherwise no easily discernible through line of subject matter or style. "XX" appears to depict, with sombre fairy-tale realism, a beleaguered princess, thrown to the ground; "Eep" features a cloudy sky, but Noel disrupts painterly illusion with a spiral of red finger-paint dots. Several works suggest closely cropped views of photographs (including one of a newborn, wearing a heart monitor); in others, the artist shows her surrealist side in carefully modelled alien structures and blobs. But it's Noel's humble assemblages, made of pastel-hued wooden blocks and dowels, that seem the oddest, if not the wildest, of the wild cards on view in this vexing, captivating show.

— *Johanna Fateman*



## ALEXANDRA NOEL PROVES SMALL IS MIGHTY AT BODEGA

In a world where we are constantly inundated with vast amounts of information, sometimes the most impactful messages are conveyed on a small scale. Enter Alexandra Noel's paintings, which compared to most of the current painting landscape, are minuscule in size.

As evident in Noel's practice, size does not matter. The Los Angeles-based artist succeeds in producing powerful portrayals on canvases often measuring less than a foot. Noel executes her works with tight, technically precise skill. Though Noel has shown her abilities in extremely life-like portrayals, she doesn't always remain committed to that painting style.

With her latest body of work currently on view at Bodega, Noel pairs hard edge lines, with more abstract, blurred aspects. Though past presentations of Noel's work have also contained a hint of dread, There's always something feels more directly eerie. Scenes that present both life and death seem to blur the lines between the two. Whether or not the works on view share a visual vocabulary is left up to interpretation, an aspect that is further emphasized by a few abstract sculpture works hanging alongside the paintings.

Zooming in both physically and metaphorically, Noel produces intimate moments that require you to pause in order to take in what you are seeing. Most works feel at the same time full of information yet also providing nothing at all about the depiction, an air of mystery filling the room. Further adding to the mystery is the press release, divulging no information about the show, rather constructing an anecdote that hints to a sick hospital patient:

*Aside from the machines an artist is connected to, he is in an empty fluorescent room. The gallerist is his lone human visitor. She leans over his vegetative face. Her eyes wander around the room as he groans and gurgles musty bubbles into her ear. She interprets this as something. She then stands in another empty fluorescent room and represents this something. She inhales as if to begin recitation but only holds her breath. "Thhhhp." She returns to the artist in his bed and listens again.*

Brimming with emotion and drama, Noel's work proves that impact can be made on a small scale, with alternating abstract and direct representations.

THERE'S ALWAYS SOMETHING is Noel's second solo exhibition with Bodega. It will be on view through December 15th.

# BeauxArts

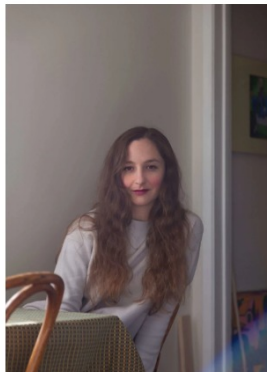
## Les peintures talismans d'Alexandra Noel

Par **Julie Ackermann** • le 27 février 2019

Aux toutes petites toiles peintes d'Alexandra Noel, on a envie de chuchoter des secrets... Elles sont comme des bijoux dans la nuit, des images prélevées d'un rêve ou d'un écran, et parachutées dans notre monde. À l'heure où proliférations visuelles en tout genre régissent notre appréhension du réel, immersion dans un univers qui sonde nos psychés angoissées.



Alexandra Noel, *Waiting for more land*, 2017



Alexandra Noel

**Je n'ai pas l'habitude d'employer la première personne**, mais les toiles d'Alexandra Noel m'ont chuchoté de me jeter à l'eau. Il est en effet physiquement et mentalement difficile de rester à distance. Ne dépassant que très rarement les 15 cm de hauteur, ces talismans de toile ou de bois sont si petits qu'ils nous font les yeux doux afin qu'on s'en approche. Pour les apprécier, il faut les laisser pénétrer cette zone intime, celle réservée aux personnes qu'on aime et auxquelles on livre des secrets.

**J'ai découvert le travail d'Alexandra Noel il y a environ trois ans.** J'ai tout de suite été frappée par ces toiles-vignettes

que j'ai d'abord appréciées en ligne, puis physiquement, sans être déçue. M'évoquant les œuvres des peintres américains Roger Brown et Gertrude Abercrombie, j'ai été séduite par leur tendresse, parfois grotesque et dérangeante : un intérieur rose bonbon tout droit sorti

Julie Ackermann, Beaux Arts, February 27, 2019

d'un conte de fées, une paire de fesses toutes raides, deux coléoptères transportant une boulette de saleté et un chien à la gueule rouge, grande ouverte. Leur facture fragile et précise m'a troublée et étrangement apaisée à la fois. Aux grands élans crâneurs du peintre virtuose, Alexandra Noel oppose une retenue et le charme d'une simplicité faussement maladroite.



Alexandra Noel, *Take your time to shit*, 2015

À l'instar des toiles rangées dans la catégorie « art naïf », les peintures de cette californienne née en 1989 sont minutieuses et recouvertes de couleurs vives souvent appliquées en aplats. Par leur taille et leurs dégradés, elles évoquent des bijoux dans la nuit et des écrans de téléphone ou d'ordinateurs. Proposant un gros plan sur une bouche de bébé ou sur un paysage cosmique, utilisant des micro-toiles ou des formats plus standards, Alexandra Noel se joue en fait des échelles et de l'élasticité des images. Tirant ses sujets de son imaginaire, de photos personnelles ou de visuels glanés ici et là, elle copie, colle, reproduit, zoome et dézoome comme le font nos doigts et nos souris à la surface d'interfaces numériques.



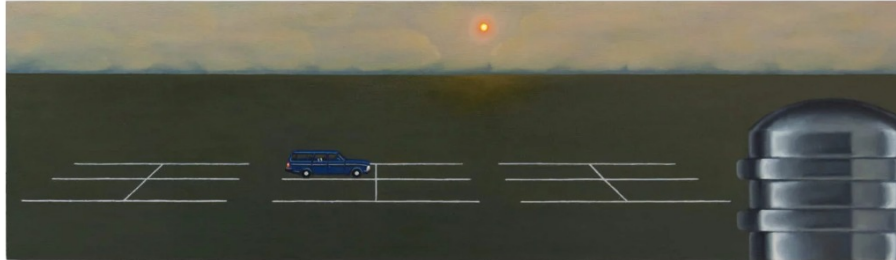
Alexandra Noel, *Ship Spotting*, 2018



Julie Ackermann, Beaux Arts, February 27, 2019

**Natures mortes, fan art, compositions surréalistes, portrait en clair-obscur, station-service...**

Alexandra Noel navigue à vue entre les genres. De temps en temps, elle s'essaie même à l'abstraction. Comme si la toile était un petit coffret, elle en peint les côtés avec une peinture industrielle. De coffrets, il est d'ailleurs systématiquement question. Ces tableaux sont de petites boîtes ouvertes, « des scènes de théâtre », comme elle le dit elle-même. Ce qui est particulièrement flagrant dans sa série de toiles panoramiques, évoquant des *sets design* de jeu vidéo à la sauce *fantasy-creepy*.



Alexandra Noel, *Empathy*, 2018

**Une menace invisible mais omniprésente pèse.**

**Si l'artiste change souvent de style** et peint à petite échelle, c'est par économie.

Alexandra Noel est une enfant du zapping et de l'accélération. Elle se lasse rapidement et revendique ainsi une certaine rapidité dans l'exécution. « Je ne veux pas « raconter des histoires », », confie-t-elle, « mais sortir de ma tête des images qui m'obsèdent. » Ces peintures s'apparentent en réalité à des instantanés d'un journal composé de choses et d'autres, de fragments de vie, de sa vie et de celles des autres, répliqués, remixés, adaptés. La peinture a en effet plus que jamais ce rôle : recycler et digérer les images du monde qui nous assaillent par milliers.

**À travers les yeux d'Alexandra, ce chaos s'organise** et a la saveur d'une Amérique brumeuse et mélancolique. Élevée en banlieue à San Diego et basée en périphérie de Los Angeles, l'artiste égraine à dessein des sentiments d'inertie et de vide à la surface de ses tableaux. En témoignent les voitures isolées, les larges ciels et les architectures rigides qui les peuplent. Une menace invisible mais omniprésente pèse et se dissout dans une forme de mysticisme contemplatif.



Alexandra Noel, À gauche: *Money Mattress* (2016); à droite : *And then the air was filled with 10,000 things (or when a minor piece of wood becomes a missile)* (2019)

Julie Ackermann, Beaux Arts, February 27, 2019

**On dit souvent que les animaux pressentent l'imminence d'un danger.** Une raison pour laquelle les canidés, vaches, cerfs ou encore rongeurs sont probablement un leitmotiv dans l'œuvre d'Alexandra Noel. Elle peint, semble-t-il, les visions d'une apocalypse qui se répand ou se dissimule dans le quotidien. Dans *Money Mattress* (2016), trois langues luminescentes sont sur le point d'enflammer un matelas. Dans la toile *And then the air was filled with 10,000 things (or when a minor piece of wood becomes a missile)*, un ballet d'objets imaginaires virevolte dans une tornade. Souvent, des hélicoptères scrutent des paysages et baignent dans une lumière crépusculaire de fin (ou d'éveil) du monde.

**Voilà pourquoi Alexandra Noel me touche autant.** Ses tableaux reflètent une vulnérabilité à l'angoisse, le sentiment de sécurité miné par l'individualisme, la complexité du monde apparaissant dans toute son étrangeté. Nous n'avons en effet jamais été si connectés et pourtant nous avons souvent le sentiment d'être éloignés du réel. Alexandra Noel semble aussi en être victime, car elle nous renvoie l'image de ces subjectivités hantées par un désastre (économique, social, écologique), l'image d'un doute qui se diffracte et se dissipe dans la substance des écrans, médias et rêves. Ces tableaux sont des talismans ancrés dans le réel, ceux d'une génération asphyxiée en quête d'un refuge.



## Orion Martin & Alexandra Noel at POTTs



**On view: September 29–November 17, 2019**

Typically when you see an art show, there is a press release to offer you guidance towards how to interpret the work in front of you. But at Bolthole, a two person show at POTTs gallery in Alhambra, only a stream-of-conscious poem of uncanny words and phrases is offered: “Bolthole...Flung Toast...Crass Map...Carnage and Cards...Grease Trap...” Painted on oddly shaped panels, Orion Martin’s paintings, although hyperrealistic, leave room for interpretation—in one, titled Listening Purse, delicate lines swirl around a purse clasp and handle. Alexandra Noel’s small scale paintings and mixed media sculptures are equally opaque at times, playing with architectural references that together with Martin’s works create a fantastical sort of dream space that the mind can drift freely through.

Annabel Osberg, Artillery, January 2, 2019

# ARTILLERY



## ALEXANDRA NOEL; ALAN TURNER

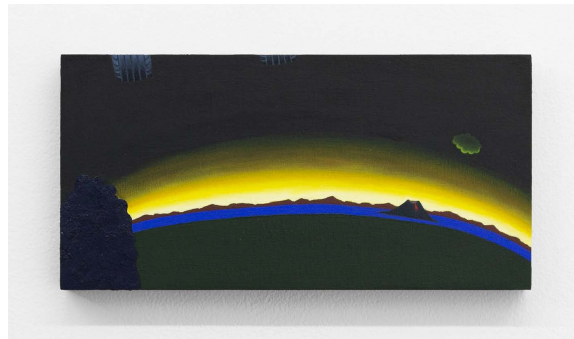
Up an elegant staircase in the Los Feliz mansion that is Parker Gallery, Alexandra Noel's paintings delineate rural scenes appearing very different than the verdant residential realm visible outside diamond-paned windows in the small chamber they currently occupy. Noel titled her show "Theatre Road" after a highway expanse in western Pennsylvania around which her parents grew up. Her paintings here are little, rarely much larger than a smartphone or tablet, and arranged on walls in a linear, serial manner. Some are firmly depictive, others more abstract. More pocket-size than easel-size, these pictures almost appear cramped to fit too-small panels; but their minuteness imparts an unsettling feeling that cascades as you peruse one painting after another. Recalling printed snapshots or digital photos viewed on smartphone screens, their diminutive scale brings to mind ways in which expansive scenes and intricate pasts are boxed into small, one-size-fits-all frameworks. Titles often allude to time or seasons. Noel's representational scenes tend towards straightforward depictions of highways, people, or animals; but their apparent simplicity gives way to tense mystery: in *Towards the end of a short life* (pictured above, all works 2018), a brown dumpster-like contraption appears as a trap, but what for? What of the glowing-eyed cow and deer in *And your sweet face came before me?* Via improbable juxtaposition alongside such paintings, brightly hued panels appearing as geometric abstractions compound the mystique of Noel's representational scenes. Downstairs, Alan Turner's captivating show exhibits a similar, slightly sinister bizarreness; among his "Paintings, 1979-2009," a pitcher pours a hair braid; and disembodied limbs form strange mishmashes.

## 10 of the Best Artworks at Frieze London 2018

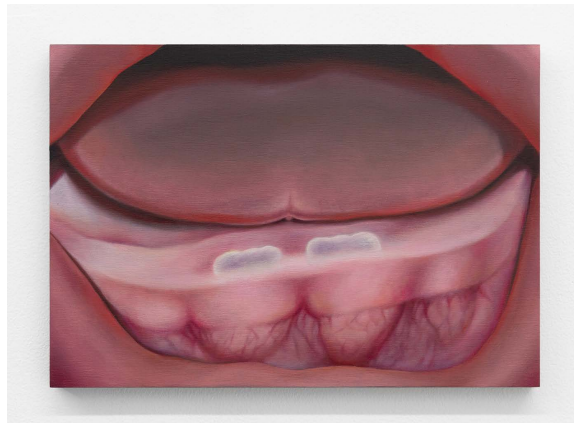
Here are some of the highlights of this year's Frieze London art fair, from new Urs Fischer paintings to a special appearance by Donald Trump.

Andrew Goldstein, October 4, 2018

ALEXANDRA NOEL  
Small paintings  
Bodega – New York  
\$2,000 to \$5,000

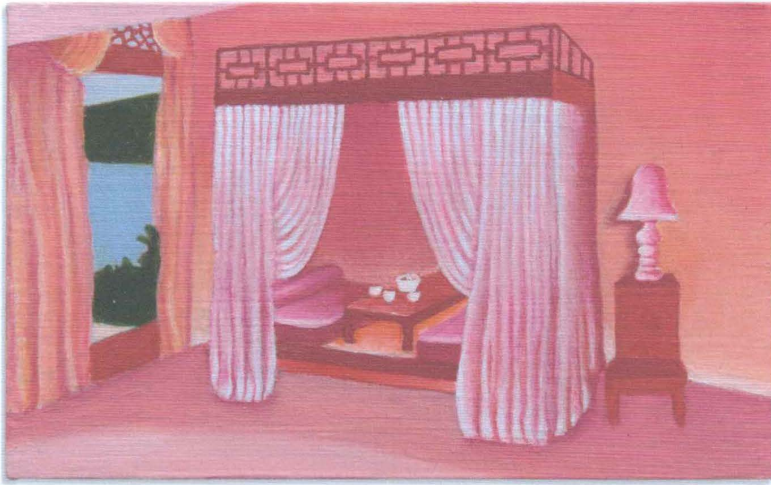


How does the 29-year-old artist Alexandra Noel make painting, that warhorse medium of the pre-technological era, feel fresh? By shrinking it down to the scale of the devices we use to consume the vast majority of content these days: smartphones, tablets, Switches, and the rest. Each of her paintings on offer in the young-galleries section is of a handheld scale that you could comfortably cuddle up with and gaze upon from an intimate distance, and this effect is then enhanced by the fact that she frequently uses her small canvases to depict sweeping landscape and other enveloping scenes—or, conversely, to use her largest formats (about the size of glorified phablet) to depict the small, like a closeup of a baby's mouth.



Perhaps because of her easily shippable scale, dealers love to show her work: over the past two years alone her paintings have been displayed at such far-flung (and chic) venues as Travesia Cuatro in both Madrid and Guadalajara; Freedman Fitzpatrick, Parker, and Night Gallery in Los Angeles; Galleria Acappella in Naples; Jessica Silverman Gallery in San Francisco; Shane Campbell Gallery and Andrew Rafacz Gallery in Chicago; Balice Hertling and Galerie Sultana in Paris; and XYZ Collective in Tokyo. That's insane.

# Flash Art



Alexandra Noel, *Miss Oberon in balmy weather*, 2015.  
Materiali vari, 7.6 x 12.7 x 2 cm. Courtesy Neochrome, Torino

## Alexandra Noel

Neochrome — Torino

Un universo minimo, creato da piccole note visive, è quanto presenta l'artista americana Alexandra Noel, nata a Los Angeles nel 1989, nell'ampio spazio della Neochrome Gallery.

Per la prima volta in Europa, invitata dalla giovane promettente gallerista Margherita Artoni, l'artista ha allestito le pareti con una serie di piccolissime tavole dipinte a olio. L'effetto d'insieme è spiazzante. La location, infatti, è un antico atrio chiuso dello storico Palazzo Paesana trasformato in un grande stanzone dipinto di bianco con nicchie e colonne. Lo spazio monumentale che un tempo serviva per il passaggio delle carrozze, contrasta con i minuti pannelli che misurano in media 12x10 centimetri. Disposti tutti alla stessa altezza in modo da formare una sorta di ellisse visiva, i dipinti diventano piccoli scrigni che raccontano intimi spazi, soggetti reali e immaginari, evocano sensazioni adolescenziali. Ispirato vagamente a Jeff Koons del periodo con Cicciolina è il dittico *Miss Oberon in balmy*

*weather* che rappresenta una stanza con letto a baldacchino, un ambiente carico di velature rosa che contrasta con l'azzurro del paesaggio dipinto in tralice. Ironico ma denso di quotidiana saggezza *Take your time to shit*, un nudo femminile di schiena, mostra sul roseo incarnato l'impronta ovale dell'asse del water. Nell'olio su tavola *Is this your dog? Whose dog is this?*, come in una favola un cane lupo esce dal buio dello sfondo. È forse il guardiano di questo intimo diario? Alle tavole si alternano oggetti sistemati nelle grandi nicchie, come reliquie evocano alcuni momenti importanti della vita dell'artista e rimandano alle collezioni di piccole cose dipinte nelle tavole. «Bone-in», così s'intitola l'esposizione, fonde linguaggio pittorico alla scrittura cinematografica. La mostra comprende anche un testo scritto da Alexandra Noel che racconta, con il format della sceneggiatura, la sequenza di un'attrice mentre taglia e mangia una bistecca. «Bone-in» è anche un work in progress che diventerà presto un libro con immagini.

— ELISABETTA TOLOSANO

## Alexandra Noel

A minimal universe, created by small visual notes, and what presents the American artist Alexandra Noel, born in Los Angeles in 1989, in the large Neochrome Gallery space.

For the first time in Europe, invited by the promising young art dealer Margherita Artoni, the artist has set up the walls with a series of small panels painted in oils. The overall effect and unsettling. The location, indefatigable, and an old hall closed the historic Palazzo Paesana turned into a large room painted white with niches and columns. The monumental space that once served for the passage of carriages, contrasts with the minutes panels measuring 12 x 10 cm on average. Arranged all the stresses height so as to form a sort of visual ellipse, the paintings become small treasures that tell intimate spaces, real and imagined subjects, evoking sensations of adolescence. Vaguely inspired by Jeff Koons and Cicciolina the period with the diptych *Miss Oberon in balmy weather* that is a room with a canopy bed, a load setting of pink glazes which contrasts with the blue painted landscape sideways. Ironical but full of everyday wisdom *Take your time to shit*, a female nude back, rosy complexion shows on the axis oval footprint of the water. Oil on wood *Is this your dog? Whose dog is this?*, like a fairy tale a wolf dog comes out of the darkness of the background. And perhaps the guardian of this intimate diary? To boards alternate objects arranged in large niches, like relics evoke some important moments in the artist's life and they point to the collections of small things painted tables. «Bone-in», so is called the exhibition, merges pictorial language to screenwriting. The exhibition also includes a written text that tells Alexandra Noel, with the screenplay format, the sequence of an actress while cutting and eating a steak. «Bone-in» and also a work in progress that will become soon a book with pictures.