

F PROFILE

Art & Style

Alex Chaves

Artist | Los Angeles, California



Artsy has dubbed Los Angeles-based Alex Chaves "the next darling of figurative painting" and The New York Times has described his work as "at once sophisticated, naïve and vaguely illustrational." One colorful oil on canvas, called "Baby Alex Baby," positions a portrait of the artist, naked from the waist up, between two baby Tibetan Buddhas whose heads are haloed in gold. He's had solo shows in L.A. and New York City and he has shown in group exhibitions in Canada and Europe.

Forbes Lists

☰ 2019 30 Under 30 - Art & Style

Drukner kunsten i rosé og croissanter?



KUNSTKOMMENTAR
MATHIAS KRYGER

Art Week er overstået, og Politikens kunstanmelder Mathias Kryger har fået serveret både vin, bagværk og god kunst. Men spørgsmålet er, om Art Weeks skulde sætte lidt mere på kunsten og lidt mindre på rosé og croissanter.

Barer et enkelt godt værk er alt, hvad der skal til for at gøre mig glad. Til fernisering på Vi Gallery i København er gruppeudstillingen 'New 'Bad' Paintings' faldet jeg over udstillingens eneste regulært gode og samtidig 'bad' maleri. 'Tzef' hedder det og er malet af amerikansk Alex Chaves, der er født i 1989, og som maler dårligt på den gode måde: ikoniske motiver, kunsthistorisk bevidst posering og med kluntet disponering, af farveleterne, der spænder lidt ben for sig selv. Den kolige rosa baggrund er som følsomt kitsch.

Det figurative og farverige maleri er tilbage efter en lang periode med zombieformalisme, hvor det var den abstrakte og formelle behandling af maleriet, der var hot. Nu virker det, som om kunstmarkedet kalder på genkendelige motiver og lidt mere schwing i farven.

På Alice Folker Gallery i Store Strandstræde – et galleri, der specialiserer sig i at vise helt unge kunstnere – hænges Asger H. Gjerdeviks også både figurative og farverige værker i de intime rum på 6. sal. Hans stil ejer umiddelbart ikke den distance, som de 'dårlige' malerier på Vi kan

have til det gamle medie. Asger Gjerdevik virker sulten – grådig og parat på den gode måde – i sine gestikulerende og lagdelte malerier, der er old school og svømmer rundt et sted i noget Willem de Kooning møder Basquiat-farvand.

Og i kælderens under Vi viser man en lille præsentation af den franske kvinde og her til lands uddannede Coline Marotta, hvis malerier og tegninger er cuteness på den gode måde med fine portrætteringer af menneskekroppens umuligheder i en tegneseriellignende stil. Også Alice Folker har tidligere vist Marotta.

DE TO GALLERIER var med i Copenhagen Art Weeks nye satsning, Gallery Day and Night, som generøst forsøgte at åbne de københavnske kommercielle gallerier for et bredere publikum. Der har visse gallerikredse været hvisket i krogene om, at færre og færre folk kommer forbi og ser udstillingerne, og at det efterhånden føles onmsont at opbygge den ene udstilling efter den anden, når næsten ingen alligevel kommer og ser kunsten.

Art Weeks galleri-initiativ inviterede derfor i torsdags indenfor til gratis croissanter fra morgenstunden og til fernisering om aftenen og til en enkelt talk eller rundvisning ind imellem.

Om initiativet lykkedes, skal jeg ikke gøre mig til dommer over, men i hvert eneste af de gallerier, jeg besøgte i løbet af dagen, blev jeg budt på croissanter. Dem havde der ikke været rift om.

ASTRID MYNTEKER åbnede sin nye udstilling med titlen 'Memes' hos det relativt nye galleri Gether Contemporary, der ligesom Vi ligger i København. Myntekers udstilling er et præcist og hyper-æstetisk portræt af et vestligt samfundsmenneske, for hvem selvet kommer først: Me. Og samtidig er udstillingen en præcis pejling af, hvordan mange yngre kunstnere arbejder: i et frit felt mellem videnskabelig, spekulativ, æstetik og teknologi. I Myntekers tilfælde med læseris sendt igennem glasplader eller med betonskulpturer angående et noget, der ligner menneskehoeder, og af de kopier, man bruger til den alternative terapiform cupping.

Ferniseringsaftenens og Gallery Day and Night's største overraskelse var imid-

lertid Julie Lænkhols smukt orkestrerede soloudstilling med noget, der kan betegnes som udmalerier i galleriets Egheden i København. Eller den store overraskelse var egentlig den ikke-annoncerede performance med den danske kunstner Samina Bazaal, som i et enkelt greb af tre kroppe tilstedeværelse, en ekstremt stærkt forfattet tekst (af Bazaal) læst op af den overjordiske skuespiller Danica Curcio, og en mindblowing sang, der trængte sig terapeutisk på, om man ville det eller ej, brugte udstillingsrummet til netop det, som udstillingsrummet også kan: at sprænge det og transportere os, der møder kunsten, helt nye steder hen.

Her – via kvindeskroppen og noget, der føltes som en kollektiv og solidarisk erfaringsverden skabt mellem ild, hår og de tilstedeværende performere – til Pakistans bjerge. Det var helt uden distance og ironi, men stadig holdt sammen af form og en klar kunstnerisk metode.

Så selv om Art Week ikke havde succes med at sælge kunsten på croissanter, lykkedes det kunstnerne at skabe meningsfyldte og gode kunstværker. Og det er alt, hvad der skal til.

“Der har i visse gallerikredse været hvisket i krogene om, at færre og færre folk kommer forbi og ser udstillingerne

program af aktiviteter med guidede ture på havnerundfart, bannere på Strøget, små kunstsamtaler hist og en lille performance her?”

Er disse relativt små gestus med til, rent faktisk, at skabe en mere dynamisk relation mellem kunsten, kunstens institutioner og kunstpublikummet? I min henseende, som kan synes helt symbolsk, havde der til Art Weeks åbningssammenkomst i Kunsthal Charlottenborgs gård dannet sig en lang kø af mennesker, der ventede på et glas gratis rosé. Denne rosé-ko dannede en mur mellem de åbningstaler, der søttede kunsten, og re-



POSITUR. 'Tzef' hedder maleriet af Alex Chaves, som kan ses på udstillingen 'New 'Bad' Paintings' på Vi Gallery i København – et galleri, for hvem det aldrig har været et problem at tiltrække et publikum. Men også et galleri, hvis udstilling ikke kræver det helt store analytiske udtræk eller abstraktionsniveau. Pr-foto

sten af de folk, der var mødt op på denne majaften – en alvaret barriere mellem politikernes og arrangørernes taler og os andre – og der opstod en symbolsk situation som et spejl på, om man i virkeligheden lader den øgede bevidsthed om kunsten hos et større publikum, som man hører efter, drukne i croissanter og rosé.

For at spørge på politikersprog: Kunne man bruge pengene bedre? For eksempel til kunsten og kunstnerne.

Det er jo i sidste ende kunstnerne, som redder det hele hjem med gode udstillingsinitiativer og skarpe værker. mathias.kryger@politik.dk

Kunsten at skabe ro for en enkelt kvinde med et ritual af lyd

Komponist Louise Alenius udfordrede igen grænsen mellem musik og tilhører med sit nye spirituelle korværk, opført i kulden under Søndermarken.

Rite of Nothing af Louise Alenius. Medv.: Korag – bestående af sangere som Pernille Rosendahl, Sharin Foo, Karen Mukupa og Kirstine Stubbe Teglbjærg – i en halv times blanding af teater og korværk skabte sang til beroligelse og tilfredsstillelse af kroppen.

Klimaet var koldt og vådt i det mørke, tomme betonrum. Og alligevel var det en følelse af varme og initiativ, der hang tilbage under brøvnene efter premieren på 'Rite of Nothing' – sammen med de sidste ekkoer af slank, enkel korsang og en fornemmelse af ikke helt at vide, hvad man havde oplevet med de måske 75 gæster, her var plads til.

'Rite of Nothing' blev opført – eller udført, som det vel hedder om et ritual – ved tre udsolgte koncerter lørdag aften på årets Bloom Festival for natur og videnskab i Søndermarken på Frederiksberg. Eller rettere: Det var under Søndermar-

ken i de gamle cisterner, at komponisten Louise Alenius og hendes nye kvindekor Korag – bestående af sangere som Pernille Rosendahl, Sharin Foo, Karen Mukupa og Kirstine Stubbe Teglbjærg – i en halv times blanding af teater og korværk skabte sang til beroligelse og tilfredsstillelse af kroppen.

Og ikke en hvilken som helst krop. Før nedstigningen i Cisternerne fik vi at vide, at vi ikke måtte gå ind i cirklen af lys, at vi skulle være stille – også efter musikken – og at der var en særlig gæst inviteret ind i værket. Gæsten, en midaldrende kvinde, sad i centrum af begivenheden, som om det var hende, de helende, manende sunge ord var rettet i mod.

PÅ EN MÅDE VAR det meget enkelt det hele. Vi gik i samlet flok ned i det gamle vandreservoir til en cirkel af steartilys

med den udvalgte kvinde i centrum. Hun drejede en lille melodi på mekanikken fra en spilledeks, og lige så langsomt brød sangere i ens røde trøjer i små grupper igennem cirklen af publikum og lys, syngende enkle melodier med få toner og få harmonier – indtil de omslutede kvinden helt. Her udførte de deres syngende ritual, langsomt, minimalistisk og suppleret med fagter og bevægelser som en kirkelig handling. Bare uden en gud eller andet religiøst som udgangspunkt. Et fritsvævende ritual i en tom verden.

Intensiteten steg, og efter en tid forlod sangerne os på en lang række og lod os og kvinden med sin spilledeksmelodi tilbage i det mærkelige rum.

På en anden måde var det ikke så enkelt endda. Måske var den inviterede kvinde cancerpatient – hun havde et karakteristisk tårklæde om hovedet – eller måske

var der en anden grund til, at hun var i centrum for det specielle ritual?

Vi fik det ikke at vide. Faktum var bare, at kunstværket var rettet mod en enkelt person, så den normale koncertsituation havde fået en ekstra dimension. Kvinden var det egentlige mål for musikken. Vi andre fik lov at se på.

DET MED KVINDEN som patient er ikke grebet ud af luften. Louise Alenius har tidligere skabt værker til en publikumsperson – også til terminalpatienter, opført for dem i timerne før deres død.

Hendes musik denne gang var spinkelt og skrøbeligt sat op i få stemmer med og mod hinanden som linjer, der forlod et punkt, blev brudt i hinandens farver og samlede sig i smukke, simple mønstre. Måske var der i virkeligheden to slags musik: kvindernes behagelige, varme stem-

mer og en anden mere kølig, højstemt solosang fra mandstemer – fra fire klassiske gæstesolistter.

Spørgsmålet er selvfølgelig, om det gav mening? Et eller andet gjorde i hvert fald noget for kvinden i centrum, som var synligt berørt efterfølgende. Men som kunst? Louise Alenius' måde at gentænke grænsen mellem medvirrende og publikum på er virkelig speciel.

Hun tror ikke, at hun kan helbrede folk rent klinisk med sin kunst. Men hun har tidligere forklaret, at hun tror, at alt godt kommer ud af den tillid, vi kan vise hinanden. Og det at lade fremmede synge for en er et udtryk for sådan en tillid. Musikken bliver en nærværende handling for en person – og for os andre en smuk oplevelse af klang og fællesskab med noget at tænke over.

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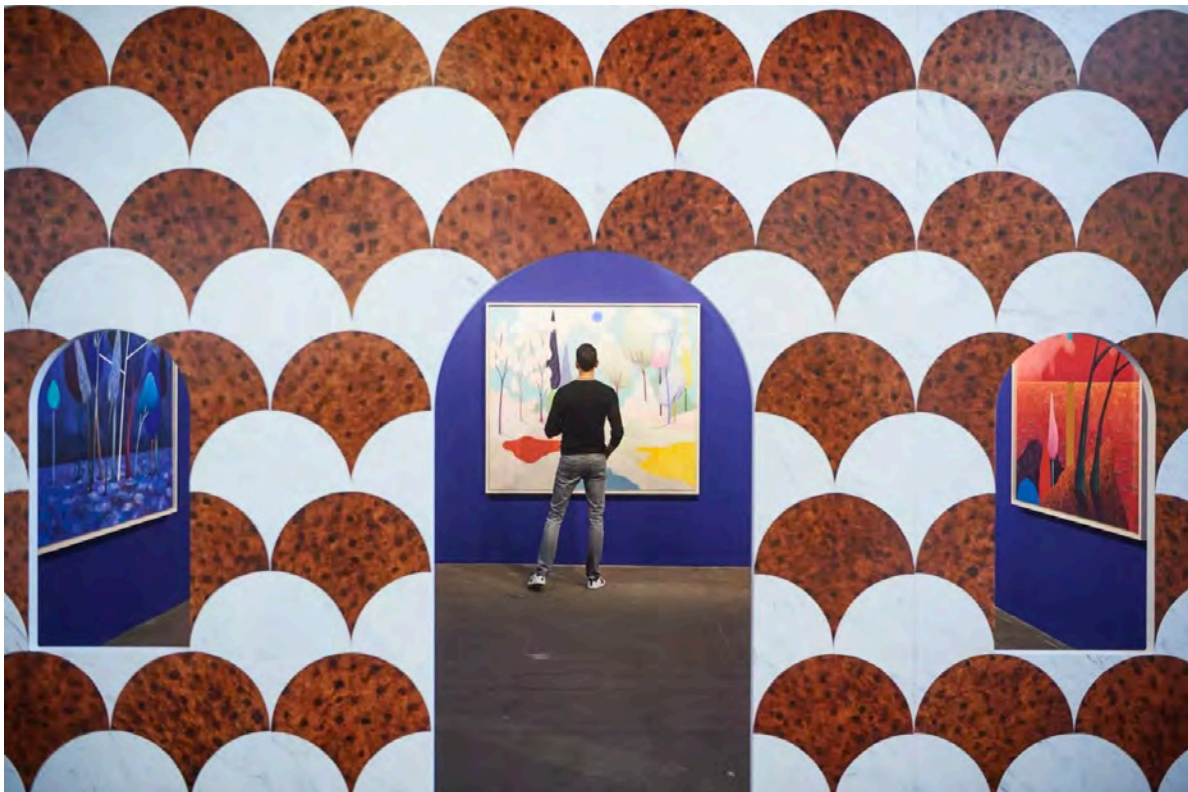
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POLITIKEN PLUS

Art Market

Art Brussels Dares Collectors to Take Risks on Young Artists—and Succeeds



Installation view of Nicolas Party's work in Xavier Hufkin's booth at Art Brussels, 2018. Courtesy of Art Brussels.

It may be the golden jubilee of Art Brussels, the annual art fair in Belgium's capital, but don't make the mistake of pointing out its age.

"50 years *young* is what we say," said the director, Anne Vierstraete, standing beside the red brick facade of the expo's space at Tour & Taxis.

Indeed, the fair, which opened to VIPs Thursday, still holds on to its youthful spirit. Dealers and collectors on the ground all agreed that it's a place where newly ascendant artists can stand out among a more relaxed fair landscape and smaller galleries can connect with the intelligent, curious, mostly Belgian collectors who loyally return each year. Of the 147 galleries from 32 countries, almost 25 percent were showing for the first time at Art Brussels.

It's a fair less reliant on the reliable name-brand artists who have become somewhat predictable fixtures on the walls at booths in Miami Beach and London.

"We have a very loyal base of collectors, because they know what to find in a fair like this," Vierstraete said. "There is a very thoughtful collector base, they have much knowledge about art history and they really come up for the artwork itself—not because it's trendy to collect this or that. 'Spec-collectors' as we call them—we don't have those collectors here."



Installation view of Georgina Gratrix's work in SMAC's booth at Art Brussels, 2018. Courtesy of Art Brussels.

It's a philosophy that pervades all facets of the Brussels art community—buy on your gut, not based on the name of the artist. That's the mantra of local collectors such as Alain Servais, who was giving tours of his exhibition space, The Loft, all week. His former home, the loft is now full of works by known entities such as Josh Kline and Athena Papadopoulos, but also artists so emerging they've never been represented by a gallery, or so local they live not only in Brussels but a few blocks away from the gallery.

“In New York, art has become a luxury object, almost about fashion, and we try to get away from that,” Servais said, standing beside Papadopoulos's sprawling sculpture installed in the bottom floor of The Loft.

The trust-your-gut philosophy often pays off for collectors in this country. At Wiels, the city's contemporary art center, the newly opened exhibition "Unexchangeable" features work solely from Belgian collectors—including the blockbuster collections of Walter Vanhaerents, Mimi Dusselier, and Bernard Soens—that was made in the late 80s and early 90s. There's stellar work by Franz West, Katharina Fritsch, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Richard Prince, and Cindy Sherman. Vierstraete mentioned that Belgian collectors often bought such works soon after they were made, and well before they achieved their current fame and market status—further highlighting the oracular power of collectors here, and the strategy among Art Brussels dealers who bring work by emerging artists at reasonable prices, hoping to lure in risk-taking collectors.

This tendency to seek out finds at a lower price point is still very alive today, Vierstraete added, and it can confound blue chippers who come with the big names in their stables.

"Sometimes, we have the major galleries, and they came with completely the wrong works—yes, very good works by famous artists, but they were already collected by the Belgians years ago."



Georgina Gratrix
Sophisticated Wrapping Paper, 2018
SMAC



Georgina Gratrix
Fruit Bowl, 2018
SMAC

“Guys like Adrian Ghenie, David Adamo, Elmgreen and Dragset, Cyprien Gaillard—they started here when they were 28, 29, 30,” she said. “Now you see them in all the Art Basel fairs, but they were here when they were young.”

At least one artist from this year’s Discovery sector could be the next on the list. Toward the end of the day Thursday, the fair awarded South African gallery SMAC the €5,000 Discovery Prize Art Brussels for its presentation of work by Georgina Gratrix, who makes playfully girlish still lifes and self-portraits laced with dark self-deprecation.

“She’s quite well-known in South Africa, so it’s really nice to have the work here,” said Shona van der Merwe, associate director at the gallery. “And of

course, the prize is wonderful.”

She added that some of the works had already sold for between €3,500 and €18,000.



Alex Chaves

Guernica, 2018

MARTOS GALLERY

The main sector also had plenty of work by artists who may not be considered brand-name, but were still finding buyers in Brussels. Ceysson & Bénétière sold three works by Noël Dolla right as the fair opened for between €35,000 and €45,000, and another hung on the wall, waiting to be scooped up.

“It’s a very easy-going fair, and the fair organizers really listen to what you

say,” said François Ceysson, a founder of the gallery. “And the collectors are very curious—of course, it’s not Basel, you won’t see someone spending \$2 million in the first morning, but it’s good to see the collectors get excited.”

Martos Gallery had a solo booth of Alex Chaves, a Los Angeles artist who is known stateside for his lush flowers and nude portraits. It’s his first exposure in Belgium. His work often pivots upon a certain Post-Impressionist art-historical reference—a show at Martos last October focused on a reimagining of Édouard Vuillard’s *First Fruits* (1899)—and at Art Brussels, the booth’s centerpiece was a reinterpretation of Picasso’s *Guernica*.

Don and Mera Rubell, the Miami mega-collectors who house their collection in a concrete hanger in Miami’s Design District, are a reliable presence at fairs of all shapes and sizes the world over, but were back in Brussels after an absence of many years. They said it’s a reliable place to spot new talent.

“We just ‘discovered’ an artist we knew 30 years ago,” Mera Rubell said. “We were just walking up to a booth and said, could that be a Joe Andoe? And then it was!”



Joris Van de Moortel
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8, 2018
 Galerie Nathalie Obadia
 Contact for price



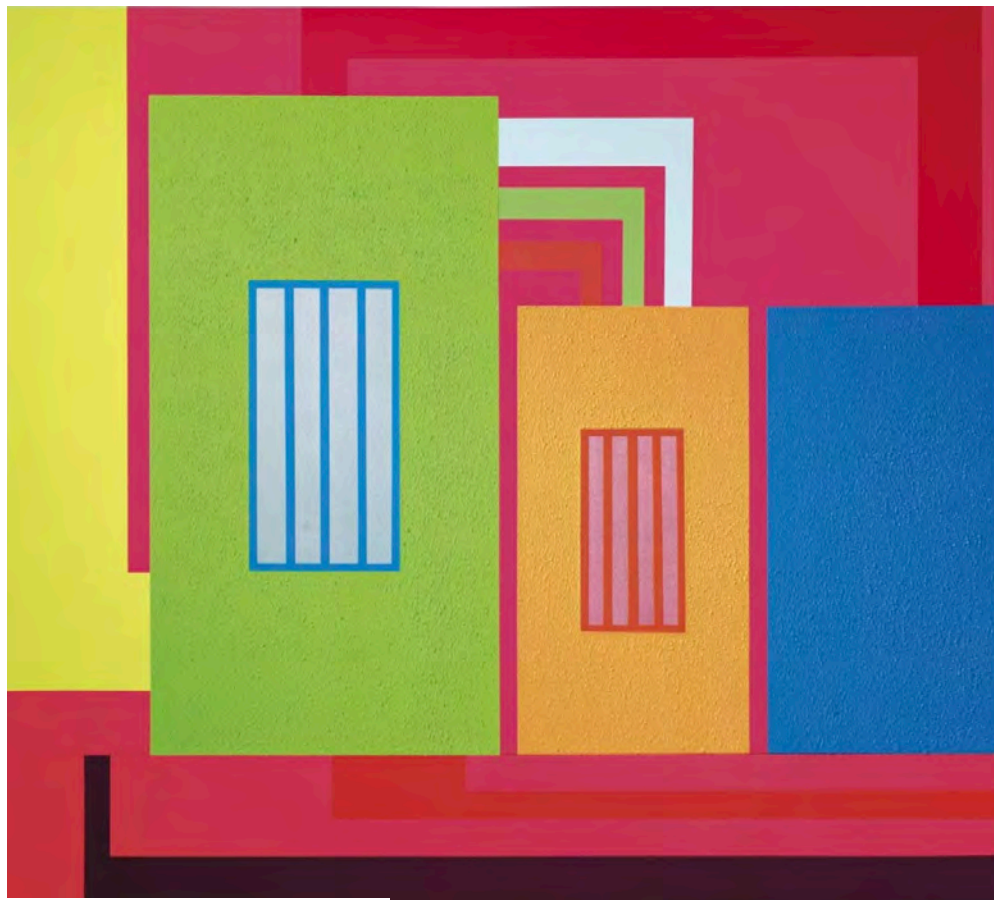
Josep Grau-Garriga
Cel estripat (Ciel déchiré), 1977
 Galerie Nathalie Obadia
 Sold

“Yes, it was in the Almine Rech booth,” Don Rubell added.

The hometown galleries take advantage of this intelligent, adventurous collector base as well. The night before the fair, Nathalie Obadia, who has galleries in Paris and Brussels, had strong sales in the first few hours, selling work by Josep Grau-Garriga and Laure Prouvost. On Wednesday night, she had opened in her local space a show by Joris Van de Moortel, and at the booth the next day was a work of his pulled from a performance at the Palais de Tokyo, *1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8* (2015). The title, the artist said while standing in the booth, invokes a punk rock drummer counting off before launching into a tune, and there’s a text aspect of the work that goes into detail about The Velvet Underground song “Sister Ray.”

Almine Rech chose Brussels as the location for its first solo show of work by

Marcus Jahmal, a Queens, New York-based artist who had created lush, arresting paintings of figures with twisted faces and wild animals and boozy nighttime scenes, because, as one gallery rep explained, they had been working with the artist for a year and he had yet to have a solo show at one of the four Almine Rech outposts. And Brussels seems to be the right choice for the young artist, born in 1990, as some of his other paintings, unrelated to the show at the gallery, appeared at the booth the next day, where in general work was being sold in the fair's first hour, a gallery representative said.



Peter Halley

Theory of Flight, 1998

Super Dakota

And on Thursday night, Clearing opened a show of work by New York-based Korakrit Arunanondchai. Clearing owner Olivier Babin moved into the massive compound in 2017—the gallery operated for five years out of a small townhouse, but the support for his program from local collectors prompted him to bet on more ambitious digs in Brussels, and he purchased a 5,400-square-foot former shutter factory and turned it into a stunning space with high ceilings that run together like the roof of a church, buttressed by separate exhibition spaces, a bar, a café, and office space. Arunanondchai filled it with monstrously big creations, including a winged creature over twenty feet wide that hovered over a plane of vertically installed stone palettes.

Back at the fair, amid the booths selling work by emerging artists at a price point of less than \$50,000, a few galleries opted to bring known entities to Art Brussels in hopes that some collectors still had holes they needed to fill—even if the piece was slightly more expensive than other options. Paris's Galerie Templon, for instance, managed to sell a work by Iván Navarro for \$125,000.

Damien Bertelle-Rogier, the founder of Brussels gallery Super Dakota, said he was transitioning the gallery from an incubator of both new talent and historically overlooked talent from the past into more of a force on the secondary market, with work by established artists consigned to be sold in the art fair arena. Cards on the table, he came to the fair with an electric

geometric painting by Peter Halley that became one of the first day's biggest buys when it sold for €160,000.



Installation view of Sofie Van de Velde's booth at Art Brussels, 2018. Courtesy of Art Brussels.

“For us, it was about the fact that we’re showing some bigger names,” Bertelle-Rogier said. “We’ve been associated with emerging artists, but we want to shift the dialogue.”

Of the Halley, Bertelle-Rogier said, “Everyone’s asking for it—there are other Halleys, but I hear this one is the best.”

Two neighboring Antwerp operations, Plus-One and Gallery Sofie Van de Velde, came together for a joint booth at the fair that gathered a bunch of

marvelously charged works united under the title of “Lust Laughter Liquor.” (A little taste of the truly great press release: “And finally there is liquor, related to celebrating good times, new bonds and wild ideas.”) And the stuff is by a slew of all-time greats: a Paul McCarthy porno rag collage, a Marcel Broodthaers manuscript in a liquor bottle, a Bruce Nauman photo of barflies balancing shots of whiskey on their fingers, a marvelous hundred-year-old Francis Picabia drawing of two couples in *flagrante delicto*.



Roni Horn

Untitled ("The disturbed Emperors made a tremendous row,..."), 2014-2016

Xavier Hufkens

At the booth for Brussels art dealing legend Xavier Hufkens, who opened his first gallery in 1987, and gave Antony Gormley, Felix Gonzalez-Torres and Rosemarie Trockel their first shows in Belgium, were works by Louise Bourgeois, Sterling Ruby, and Roni Horn. Local collectors don't

seem to be familiar with Horn's cylindrical works topped with glass so clear it could be mistaken for water, or air—and many attendees had to be told to not touch the work.

Xavier Hufkens was also vying for the Solo Prize Art Brussels, a €10,000 award given to one of the many galleries who opt to construct a separate part of their booth and devote it to a single artist. The artist Nicolas Party had built a little chapel within the booth, carving out windows in the walls that let visitors peer into a space housing three of his alien landscapes. He had pulled off a similar tour de force when he carved out a curve-topped entrance in a red wall in front of The Modern Institute's booth at Art Basel Hong Kong in March, and when he built a maze of walls into New York's Karma gallery last October.

On Thursday afternoon, word got out that Party had indeed won the solo prize, prompting Hufkens to get a bottle of Ruinart to pop in the middle of the partitioned-off all-red booth with the curvy windows. At that point, the gallery had already sold all the work by Party, priced between €50,000 and €80,000. There were many things to toast. •

Three-Sentence Reviews: Peter Saul's Fake News, Trevor Paglen's Zombie Conceptualism, and 7 More September Shows

By Jerry Saltz

Alex Chaves; *Dizzy Buchanan*

Martos Gallery

41 Elizabeth Street / through October 21

For his second outstanding show at this perennially nervy gallery, Alex Chaves, 28 and already adept at declarative opaque color and metamorphosing roiling surfaces, picks up his game, bringing it more firmly into realms of visual pleasure, cryptic politics, and decorative magic.

Unafraid to crawl inside the skins of masters like Vuillard, Baselitz, Guston, and Van Gogh, Chaves gives us flowers up close; juicy sluices of paint that form a clock; *Khalif*, a gorgeous Bernard Buffet-meets-Egon Schiele portrait of a nude black man reclining before what looks like a Bavarian townscape; and finally, a broken-up figure that instantly conjures Georg Baselitz's early-1960s mold-breaking *Hero* paintings of fallen German figures. If this L.A.-based painter, poet, and performer (and other younger artists working in similarly lit-up figurative territories) can stay the course, good things lie ahead for an art world in obvious transition and rebuilding.

Art Market

NADA's Emerging Art Community Thrives amid Turbulent Times

Alexxa Gotthardt



Installation view of Martos Gallery's booth at NADA Miami Beach, 2016. Photo courtesy of the gallery.

The 14th edition of NADA opened its doors on Thursday morning with buoyant energy and significant sales, gathering 110 galleries from 17 countries. As is tradition for the emerging art fair—a perennial foil to Art Basel in Miami Beach's more formal atmosphere—the ambiance felt communal, even familial as the day kicked off. Dealers, collectors, and

artists filing into the halls of the Deauville Beach Resort could be overheard discussing the power of art and coming together in moments of political and social turmoil, the likes of which we've seen of late. Indeed, never before has NADA's warm environment been more welcome. And that atmosphere encouraged interest in a strong, wide-ranging selection of work—from sought-after figurative paintings by Alex Chaves and Mira Dancy, to a politically pointed installation from Terence Koh, to the spellbinding works of self-taught artists Derrick Alexis Coard and Karen May, which could be taken home for a little as \$200.

Just an hour after the fair kicked off, the owner and director of Martos Gallery rubbed elbows with exhibiting artists Alex Chaves and JPW3, along with a throng of collectors. By that point, all four of Chaves's paintings in the booth—which ranged from \$5,000 to \$14,000—had sold or were on hold. And while the young, Los Angeles-based artist's canvases could certainly be considered part of the thriving figuration trend, they're also loaded with weighty social and art historical content.

“His work really responds to his community,” said the gallery's Ebony Haynes, as she looked at the booth's centerpiece, a painting brimming with fractured figures—several nudes, a prince, and a classical bust. She went on to explain that the piece fused likenesses of Chaves's friends with his interest in the late downtown New York artist Dan Asher's work, which also hung in booth. “They both approach portraiture almost anthropologically, through close interaction with the people that surround them,” she continued. “And people really seem to be responding to that sense of human connection right now.” Asher's series of loose, gestural portraits on paper, made with heavy scribbles, were a talk of the fair. Priced from \$7,000 to \$15,000, several had sold by the afternoon.

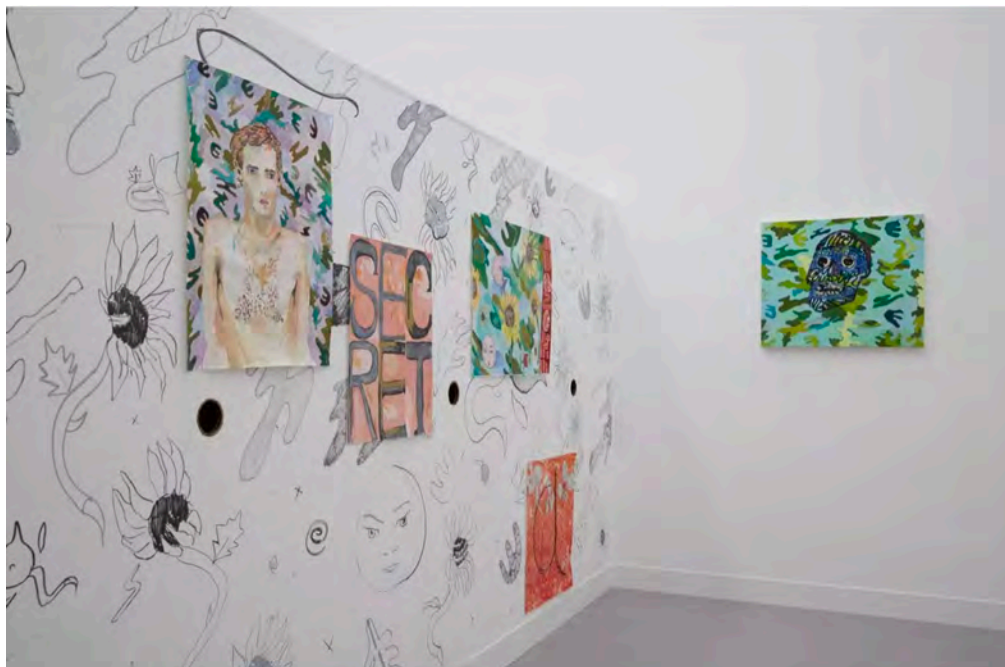
The 20 Best Booths at Frieze London

Marina Cashdan

Martos Gallery

Focus, Booth H29

With works by Alex Chaves



Installation view of Martos Gallery's booth at Frieze London, 2016. Photo by Benjamin Westoby for Artsy.

Why you should stop

After a lauded (and sold-out) solo show at Martos Gallery in New York this spring, 28-year-old painter Alex Chaves's new portraits and still lifes stand out amongst the figurative work at the fair, not only for their boldly colored patterns—such as camouflage and florals—but for the suggestive meaning behind them. One work features a wall with three “glory holes” emblazoned with Chaves's hand, as well as a drawing that reads “SECRET” and works on paper that create an intimate vignette that's unexpected in the booth of an art fair. This Thursday, the artist will be giving readings at the booth: one taking place at 12:10pm and the other at 2:10pm.

April 19, 2016

Art Reviews

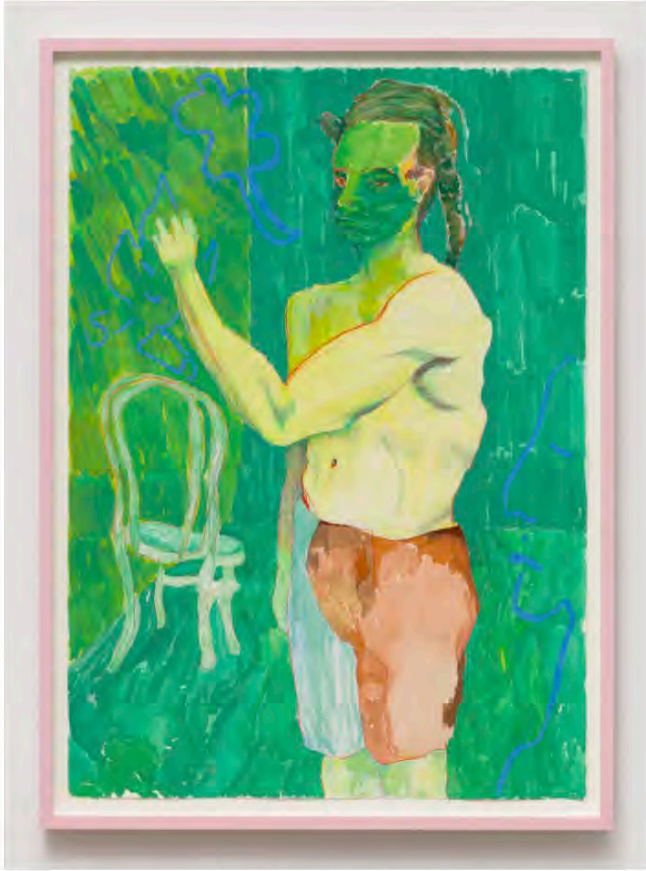
Paintings of Nudes and Flowers, Dripping with Color and Quirk

by Carey Dunne



Alex Chaves, "Roses" (2016), ink, paint, colored pencil, and marker on paper (all images courtesy the artist and Martos Gallery)

Pastels, floral still lifes, and portraits of babies are about as safe and traditional as visual motifs come — they evoke a cutesy Hallmark aesthetic. But in *The Rose Period*, a series of paintings and mixed-media drawings on view at Martos Gallery, Los Angeles-based artist Alex Chaves gives these themes new, dimensional life.



Alex Chaves, "Painter" (2016) Ink, paint, colored pencil, and marker on paper (click to enlarge)

The show's title, a tongue-in-cheek reference to Pablo Picasso's early obsession with reds, oranges, pinks, and earth tones, alludes to the Modernist, post-Impressionist, and Expressionist influences Chaves blends in these canvases. In addition to overt Picasso homages — a harlequin appears in one dreamy landscape — echoes of Egon Schiele show up in moody, bony-shouldered figures, some set amid jungly, Paul Gauguin-esque backdrops.

It's the texture and riotous color here that makes what could be tired subjects fresh.

The application is loose and energetic,

never overwrought. The green-faced figure in "Painter" (2016) lifts a disproportionately small, nubbin-like hand, while a chair standing behind him is reduced to a shimmering outline. The paint in "Bedroom" is applied almost like scraps of construction paper, in solid-colored patches. At the center of "Baby Alex Baby," a self-portrait flanked by two haloed baby Buddhas, is a swath of citron yellow so bright it hurts your eyes. In the many still life paintings of flowers in vases, dappled brushstrokes create rippling movement; wormy bits of clay are used as petals; the word "ROSE" is scrawled repeatedly in a red background. In "Peter," a male nude, skin is rendered in a kind of camouflage pattern of pinks and yellows.



Alex Chaves, "Baby Alex Baby" (2016), oil on canvas

With all the blossoms and babies, it's a seasonally appropriate show, but there's just enough hallucinatory weirdness to offset any sentimentality. In the dreamy, Matisse-like interior "Bedroom," the floor opens up into a cloudy sky filled with wan green figures; the wiggling walls and bed frame seem to be melting. The characters in these paintings are not skipping, but floating through stoned hazes, into spring.



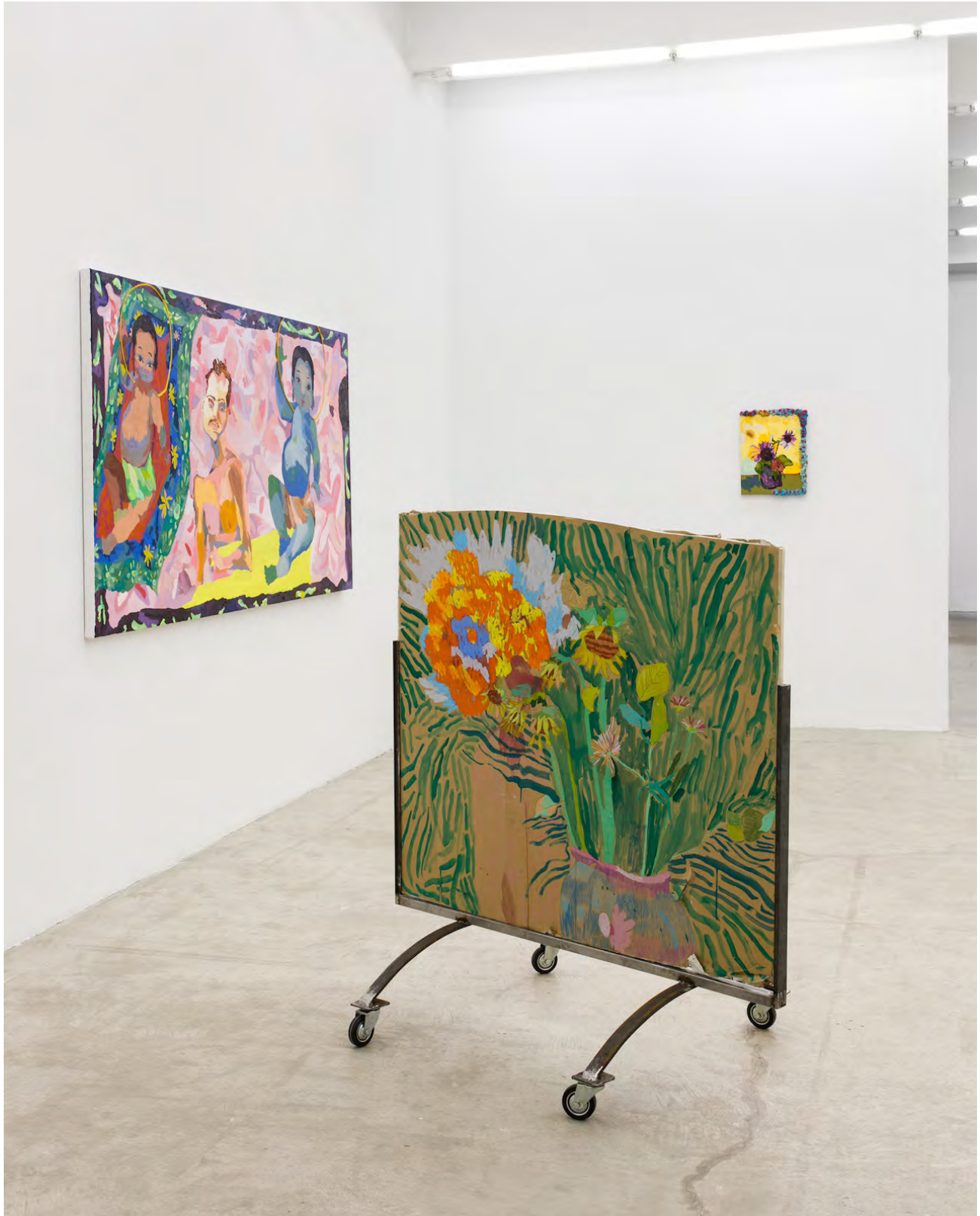
Alex Chaves, "Bedroom" (2016), oil on canvas



Alex Chaves, "Painter" (2016), ink, paint, colored pencil, and marker on paper



Installation view of Alex Chaves's 'Rose Period' at Martos Gallery



Installation view of Alex Chaves's 'Rose Period' at Martos Gallery



Installation view of Alex Chaves's 'Rose Period' at Martos Gallery

Alex Chaves's The Rose Period continues at Martos Gallery (540 West 29th Street, Chelsea, Manhattan) through April 23.

What to See in New York Art Galleries This Week

Art in review, from Times critics.



Alex Chaves's "Baby Alex Baby," an oil on canvas in his New York solo debut at Martos Gallery. Courtesy of the artist and Martos Gallery, New York

Alex Chaves, 'The Rose Period'

By ROBERTA SMITH

Like many young artists today, Alex Chaves seems to view painting and early Modernist figuration as full of potential, and he argues the case convincingly in his New York solo debut at Martos. His paintings, at once sophisticated, naïve and vaguely illustrational, combine a roving color sense and engaging paint handling with emotional poignancy. His New York solo debut is cheekily titled "The Rose Period" after one of the earliest

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(1904-6), most popular phases of Picasso's career.

Like Picasso in those years, Mr. Chaves takes inspiration from Post-Impressionism, Fauvism and Symbolism and applies it to somewhat neurasthenic figures who may be friends. "Peter," a standing nude in a landscape, reprises Cézanne's "The Bather," except that the arms are posed like those of the youth in Picasso's Cézanne tribute, "Boy Leading a Horse."

"The Rose Period," a long mural-like rectangle, is populated by a Picassoid harlequin in pink polka dots, two Gauguinesque Tahitians and a wan couple reminiscent of absinthe drinkers. The requisite bit of pastoral water — a baby-blue river with baby-pink stones — contrasts with a bright-yellow foreground. In "Baby Alex Baby," his self-portrait is flanked by baby Buddhas — one blue, and one pinkish-brown that rests on a beautifully suggested textile.

Jagged pieces of drywall fitted neatly into shiny metal frames on wheels occasion mobile two-sided paintings made a bit wilder by graffitilike scribbles of colored pencil.

Mr. Chaves's surfaces are rough and patchy but intimately so, and his shapes are rarely a single color. He prefers to apply scores of closely related hues, one distinct stroke at a time, and the forms flatten, bulge or fragment accordingly. In his best paintings, this process offers the possibility of endless exploration and makes them feel fresh and promising.

Martos Gallery

540 West 29th Street, Chelsea

Through April 23

From Time Bombs to Fruit Baskets: Goings-On in London, New York, and Los Angeles

BY **JAMIE STERNS**

London Art Pitch is a monthly column by Jamie Sterns, a New York curator and writer attending school in the British capital.

Recently returning to London from a short jaunt to New York and Los Angeles gave me an update on what is happening in these three respective cities. Everyone's favorite pastime, of comparing and contrasting these major art hubs to each other, is facile in the big scheme of things, but it does serve the purpose of teasing out some isolated regional developments. With this in mind, I will do a quick survey of the trends in each locale to give a taste of what is happening now and what may be in the air for the coming months.

Lastly, L.A. To get to the heart of it, L.A. was full of more pink, body parts (especially penises), and transparent paintings than I could have ever imagined. The abundance of these three things was so overwhelming that it was annoying at times, but alas, when thinking it over, one can understand why this might be the case. With so much blasting sun, it is hard not to think of the body and the oozing of sex that is produced from the exposure and maintenance of body parts. Two solo shows that embody this trend (in a fun/not annoying way) were **Alex Chaves at Night Gallery**, which just closed, and **Elad Lassry at David Kordansky**, which runs through November 5.



Installation view of **Alex Chaves** at **Night Gallery**.

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Chaves is a painterly sort and he gamely mixes styles, tapping van Gogh, Gauguin, and puffy paint to make images, textures, and color choices that are both garish and quirky. He paints interiors, still lifes, and male nudes spread eagle, but in all of them there is a sweetness and a sort of private effort that makes them sentimental, but not in a pathetic way. Rather, they feel like postcards from the heart and memory prisms to spread feelings through light and color.

THE BLOG

Top 10 Painting Shows You'll Be Talking About This Month

September is now upon us, as art collectors return to their city homes, bronzed and relaxed from the summer sun. As a first taste of fall, we've rounded up a selection of exhibitions featuring painting that we are looking forward to, from Tokyo to Los Angeles and everywhere in between.

[Yuh-Shioh Wong](#), [Alex Chaves](#)

[Night Gallery, Los Angeles](#),

12 September - 10 October

Yuh-Shioh Wong's new work has a breezy lightness to it, perhaps due to a change in location. Now based in Los Angeles (formerly in New York, and after a stint in San Francisco), the artist's paintings, in acrylic and aqua oil, while still drawing from nature, have become steadily more abstract and lyrical as well, with a light, aqueous and sun-drenched palette. In the project room at Night Gallery, one will find works by painter and poet Alex Chaves, along with a hand-painted rug that runs the entire length of the room. A book of poetry by Chaves, titled [Abigail Adams](#), published by Penny-Ante, will be launched during the run of the exhibition.

--Natalie Hegert

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Art in America

April 2, 2015

ALEX CHAVES

By Tracy Jeanne Rosenthal



Alex Chaves: *Baby*, 2014, oil on canvas, 22 by 18 inches; at Artist Curated Projects.

The surfaces shine. Maybe it's sweat. Perhaps the walls, the floors, the chairs and anything that surrounds the figures present in [Alex Chaves](#)'s latest body of oils are perspiring with the labor of becoming abstract. Leaves bloom in interior space. Sinewy lines adorn the upholstery. A cherry hovers in the periphery. Lilies flower from a subject's ear. The palette is Crayola chic: canary, turquoise, candy apple. The paint is maximal, dramatic. Sometimes it splits a body into its planar forms. Sometimes gobs of it line the lips of a canvas, enduring as a frame. The kind of lawlessness that prevails in these works is painting at its psychedelic best. Fantasy is always just a raunchy interpretation of the real.

But the queer hermeneutics of domestic space belong less to the canon of oils than to cinema's variously shunned and celebrated stepdaughter: melodrama. In Fassbinder's *The Bitter Tears of Petra Von Kant*, the camera never leaves the heroine's apartment, which is populated not by people but by the kinds of wretched feelings only German can name. Always failing to boil over into action, these sentiments emerge instead in bizarre compositions, perspectives, and extravagances of fashion and home decor. "I wanted to bring out the inner violence, the energy of the characters, which is inside and can't get through," Douglas Sirk wrote of his totalizing, saturated film sets. Chaves shares Sirk's lascivious eye for the odd corners in the hallucinogenic confines of the home. Rather than "ground" and "figure," Chaves's work seems to demand the cinematic language of "mise-en-scène," or even behavioral psychology's "milieu." Indeed, the faces and muscles bifurcated by reds and blues, and the ghostly white silhouette of a face in profile that twice appears in a high right corner, should signal us beyond representation's worn routines of identification and desire, and toward a better investigation of the bizarre rituals of looking and being looked at, or the hysterical disjuncture between seeming and being.

Feminists invented object-oriented philosophy. Emerging in response to the interiorized morality of the 19th century, melodrama deals in the parallel between interior space and interior life, between women's place as caretakers of commodities and the absurd position of being commodities themselves. Of course, Freud saw melodrama as furnishing the essential machinery for the psychic horror of disclosing one's sexuality to oneself. Chaves revamps not just the anachronistic medium of oil but also melodrama, with its high-wire excesses of subversion and escapism. At stake is the pathos of interiors, both lonely and suffocating, the sublimation of feelings within things, and the drive that makes a Disneyland of every crotch.

Baby (2014) spells out "Baby" in a piquant script. Perhaps the perfect term to conjoin the artist's childlike palette and polymorphous perversity, what is "baby" besides a placeholder, an ultimately uninhabitable projection of the lover onto the loved, onto the half holy ideal/half thing? When Taylor Swift, in a triumph of a music video, throws herself and various housewares across the grounds of an ornate estate, slashing portraits of former partners with kitchen knives and her mind, she sings, "I got a blank space, baby, and I'll write your name." Melodrama discloses the glorious circuits of mutual exploitation that make each individual both culprit and victim. Poor baby, you always hurt the ones you love.

December 5, 2013

The Coolest Girl In America: Boy Paintings

AN EXHIBITION BY ALEX CHAVES



Text by Jared Yamanuha | Images by John Hook

Stepping inside SPF Projects, greeted by a series of bold, colorful paintings and sculptures by multi-disciplinary artist Alex Chaves, is like receiving a great big hug from someone you've just met. These playful pictures, at once intellectual and entertaining, brainy and beautiful, offer a unique view of Hawai'i as seen through the eyes of the New Jersey-born, Los Angeles-based artist.

For his first solo show in Hawai'i, *The Coolest Girl in America: Boy Paintings*, Chaves dishes up large and small oil paintings that utilize both traditional techniques and not-so-typical methods, like using pastry piping bags to dispense thin dollops of paint on to the surfaces of his canvases. Another application involves thick globs of paint used to border a small canvas, creating a de facto frame made of paint.



How this West Coast painter ended up in the middle of the Pacific—a place he had never visited until this year—can be attributed to Drew Broderick, owner of SPF Projects. The two came to know each other through a mutual friend in college, and Broderick, fascinated by Chaves' youthful and indulgent style, approached him with the idea of doing a residency in Hawai'i.

“Part of the reason why I was interested in doing this project was because Hawai'i was so enigmatic to me,” says Chaves. “I really didn't know anything about this place, and upon arrival, I truly felt like I was in a foreign place, that Hawai'i was outside my idea of America.”

In his paintings, Chaves references everything from Hello Kitty to fruit to tennis, but the work is far from strictly representational. Although the imagery is, at times, recognizable, Chaves seeks to create a body of work that isn't easily digestible. “I'm trying to create a sort of language of its own, in which you're forced to consider associations that you might not otherwise,” he says. Images clash; visual mash-ups occur; the canvases hopscotch between abstraction and figuration.

Thanks to Broderick, Chaves has immersed himself in local culture for the past few months. “Drew has been really supportive and helpful with every aspect of me being here, from understanding the culture and the city to giving a second eye to some of the things that I'm doing.” The

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resulting work deals with a fractured spiritual self in a realm of pulsating leisure and natural beauty.

It's clear that SPF Projects is spearheading an eclectic program, declaring itself an experimental art laboratory where diversity trumps any singular aesthetic. "It's a fascinating project," says Chaves. "He's considering a ton of different perspectives that I think will continue to surprise people."

In the end, Chaves says, "I want to pay homage to Hawai'i, and present my perspective of what it was like being here."