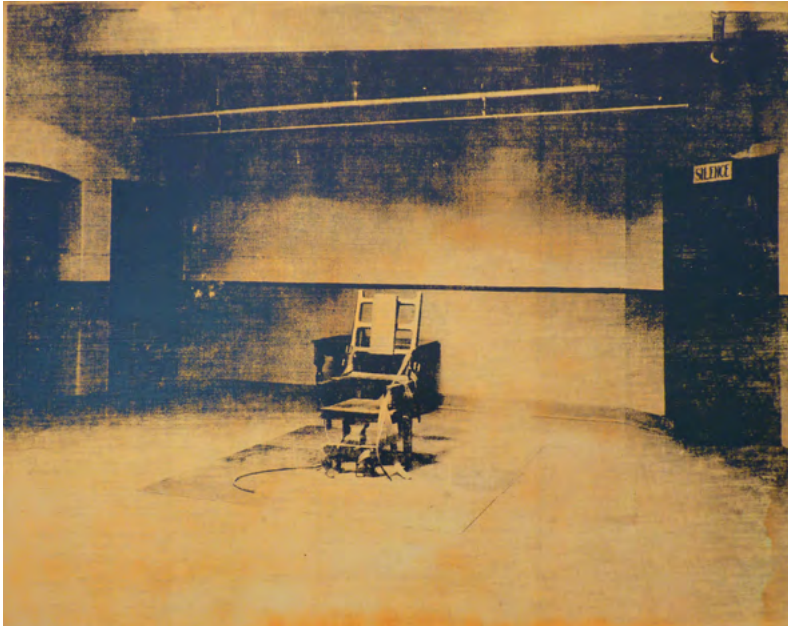


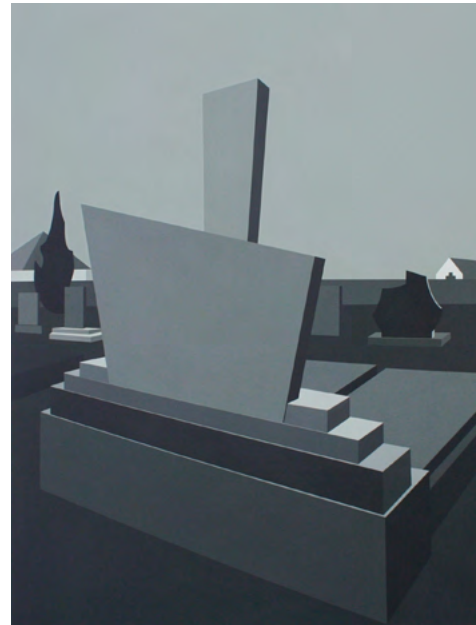
The precious banality of Alexandra Barth's pictures

There, life would be easy, simple. All the servitudes, all the problems brought by material existence would find a natural solution. A cleaning lady would come every morning. Every fortnight, wine, oil and sugar would be delivered. There would be a huge, bright kitchen with blue tiles decorated with heraldic emblems, three china plates decorated with yellow arabesques in metallic paint, cupboards everywhere, a handsome whitewood table in the middle with stools and bench-seats. It would be pleasant to come and sit there, every morning, after a shower, scarcely dressed. On the table there would be a sizeable stoneware butter dish, jars of marmalade, honey, toast, grapefruit cut in two. It would be early. It would be May, the start of a long summer's day.

— Georges Perec, Things



Andy Warhol, Electric Chair, 1964



Personal Memorial, 2018, acrylic on canvas, 145x100 cm, 57 3/32x39 3/8 in

How does AB depict the two poles of her potential future, namely luxury and death? There exists between them a paradoxical relationship that creates a sense of emptiness; bluster and augmentation brings the approach of death (the death drive, Freud¹).

This text, too, begins with the end, and perhaps we will discover where in AB to find “precious banality”. On the one side the feeling is something reminiscent of Matisse's great interiors, on the other it's cautionary in its shape, the shape of a grave, that advance guard of death *avant la mort*, the picture *Personal Memorial*

(2018). Here the grave faces away from the spectator, and we don't know whose it is, only the shape is important: indeed the shape is more compelling than the sense it's a grave.

Similarly, note Warhol's *Electric Chairs*:² the very chair shape, everything that surrounds it (the interior) and hangs off it comes across as a sign of death.

Luxury, in the oval and thus acknowledged decorative portrait of a woman (*Smoker*, 2014), is in AB's rendering also an idol of woman for women (coming across in this dominant “male” discourse as an anti-heroine); a little

- 1 The goal of the death drive is to return a living organism to its original inorganic state. It works in silence, until it comes out and manifests as an aggressive or destructive drive. All drives available to experience are alloys of the life and death drives. Sigmund Freud postulated the death drive's existence in his 1920 work *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, having in earlier works regarded the sex drive and the id drive (self-preservation drives) as opposing. However he later concluded the id was a reservoir of the libido, because the objective libido can contract into the id, in which situation we refer to the narcissistic libido. The id thus has its libidinal components, placing it among libidinal objects. So Freud identified the id drive and the sex drive with “life drives” (*Lebenstriebe*) endeavoring to create life, to renew and preserve it, while the real opposite to these drives is the death drive, the aim of which is destroying life. Neurotic conflict, earlier explained as the conflict between the id drive and the sex drive, is from the writing of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* interpreted topically, as the conflict between the id and the libidinal occupying of objects. This new understanding also relates to the sadistic component of the sex drive, which in isolation may give rise to sadism perversion. This sadistic component is in fact the death drive, which is however primal and concentrated first on the id itself. This is primary masochism, the existence of which Freud initially assiduously denied; now on the contrary he had no choice but to defend it. So masochism is primary, sadism is secondary: the resetting of the death drive onto some object. It follows that masochism is not the turning of sadism against one's own id, but just a return to a more primal phase of this drive. Once more, the conservative, regressive character of the death drive shows here. Michal Patarák: Freudovo chápanie puđu smrti v čase jeho uvedenia, 2015. Yet the existence and use of the death drive is uncertain.
- 2 Warhol's words “I realized everything I was doing must have been Death,” or “every time you turned on the radio they said something like ‘Four million are going to die,’” was the beginning of his series of disasters, accidents, and skulls. The *Little Electric Chairs* series is from 1964 – 1965.

Coco Chanel fantasy:³ cool to the point of hardness, independent, giving nothing away, all too intelligent and thus hard to deceive or to catch being emotional, and successful yet alone with her own body, whose problems she shares with no one.

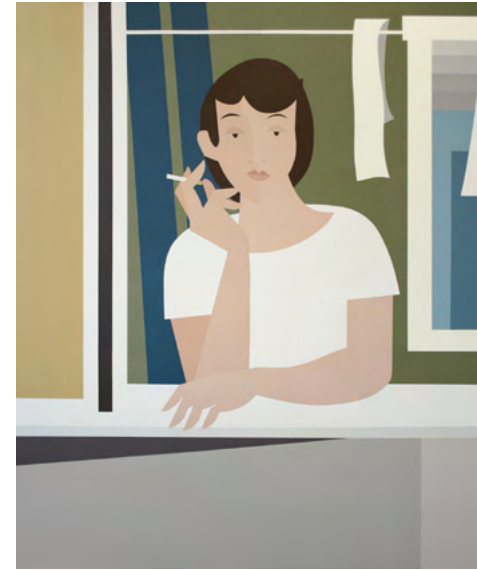
She is not of the same class as the artist. How might AB use her painting technique to depict the opposite pole, that of poverty: slapped-together hovels, scrappy clothing, something uninhabitable, made of cheap cloth, perhaps a shredded tent; how depict dirt? And how will AB depict a housing estate that has stepped beyond its socio-economic designation?

In contrast to the image of the above-described emancipated *Smoker*, note the picture *On the Balcony* (2016). In her 2016 to 2017 period, it is the picture that creates perhaps the most harmonic relationships of continual toggling between shape (I will not speak of abstraction in AB's case, but simply of shapes; to me abstraction means indiscernibility, ungraspability, i.e. Bataille's formless or *informe*,⁴ which is rare and relational, unbound from any "likeness"; I don't suppose that *informe* is what AB is after; *informe* is not concerned with shape, however concrete the abstract can be, *informe* is structurally determinable as the shattering whole of the structure; the countering of shape) and referent.



Smoker, 2014, acrylic on canvas, 40 x 60 cm, 15 3/4 x 23 5/8 in

- 3 Coco Chanel withdrew from society after an affair with a Nazi officer, though in her later years she broke back in with her fashion house. An earlier partner had perished in a car accident. She was known as an acerbic and sarcastic wit.
- 4 Bataille's term *informe*, popularized in 1929 – 1930 in the surrealist journal *Documents*, is indicated rather than defined, defying definition in its very essence. It is a destruction, a tearing or cutting apart within a form or thing, by which something new is contrived that is achieved for example through an indistinct similarity to something obscene – in this it has a connection to psychoanalysis and trauma. The formless is much discussed in the work of Didi-Huberman, though he offers a different interpretation than Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Kraus. However in my own vocabulary, formless also means seeing of the unseen and a marked sense of having lost a referent – in this one could for example find *informe* in Mallarmé's poetry.



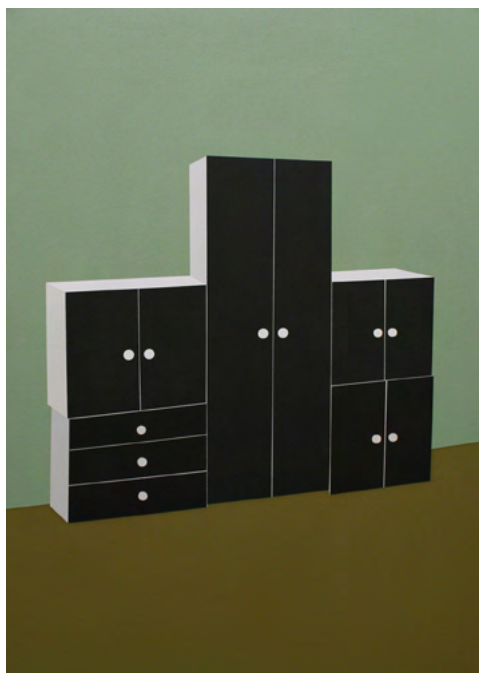
On the Balcony, 2016, acrylic on canvas, 100 x 120 cm, 39 3/8 x 47 1/4 in

Motion in AB's pictures is somewhat rare, but in this one it is continual; I sense it flowing from the hand gestures and the uncertain expression: is she tired, or arrogant? Both of these conjoin in one's turning inwards, but this is displayed on a balcony for similarly invisible people. This is the situation she's put spectators in, of becoming people of the housing estate, though not for their resemblance to the heroine.

When we refocus from the balcony into the flat, there's a toggling of lonesomeness and independence: is this a proud homeowner, or a woman with her "hands full" of housework? Is she working for others or for herself?

Where this occurs, the resulting intangible picture (for painting often forgets about pictures, and vice versa), i.e. that which every picture doesn't have (a picture "without" should be called something lesser, perhaps an image), that which is above the picture – that which, together with Deleuze and his perspective on Proust, we call essence: is it occurring in the gesture of the picture *On the Balcony*'s coloring? In this specific case, where gesture and coloring are saying the same thing, as if one were not drawing on or sharing from the other. That is, what is the difference between essences and atmospheres? Note this difference to Mednyánszky: he mostly uses atmospheres, not essences, as in his work the resulting picture has been a priori given, in that it is depicted as a picture of the resulting picture (through the technique of particularization transforming a whole into parts – strokes that "seem authentic"), by which the resulting picture is disturbed.

Today, essences are often untraceable, thanks to the mechanical proofs of fantasy (surrealism, psychoanalysis), such as in leading the eye. They occur as they do in



Cabinets, 2017, acrylic on canvas, 100x70 cm, 39 3/8x27 9/16 in

the picture *Cabinets* (2017): those who have experienced the reality depicted see it somewhat more softly than ideology; the whole way of life through times we see in retrospect as a socio-economic reality we never chose. If we're going to discuss ideology here, then let it be as we do of an interior that has maintained the remoteness and adamancy of an exterior, as to a great extent we don't choose our homes. Class designation is felt as an embarrassment, and so – particularly among intellectuals – it is often not spoken of, unless they gain from visualization a “cheap” means of transcending their own class.⁵ Compared to this, the fantasy of transcending class, i.e. intellectually, is in our environment perceived as a vice. That, and recognizing the feeling “of black cabinets from the early 1990s”, after a time is no longer understandable. Now some will delight in the affinity that comes from someone else also recognizing it; delighting in the picture, or in the shared transcending of an underprivileged past?

Yet what's to become of this picture and how will it be seen when all these people have died?

There won't be anyone left with real experience with that specific green or brown, with white corners and black panels, with round knobs, with that time.

(But in a similar vein don't forget that, for declining, a binding of time and style is shown in small cuts [note this term later in the text] forming the heel of a shoe, making a link to the vacuum cleaner shape in the picture *Vestibule on Vilová Street*, 2017.)

Departure and death create an exchange of context, and inabsoluteness of pictures.

5 See Didier Eribon's book describing his shame at his proletarian origins, which he concealed in Paris' intellectual academic/journalistic environment.

Even though the people able to distinguish such pictures will no longer be, it's necessary to describe these pictures, because maybe, at least for a while, the principle of creating this type of pictures will perish; the pictures themselves will be lost. Therefore, and for a structural kinship with AB, we might ask what the Dutch Little Masters became, or where they went. Perhaps that is also how the way opened for AB toward so-called “Low painting”, i.e. the state painting is in today.

The term *Low painting* is an expression of a differing dominance among pictures; for the function of the term, it defines today's painting as a priori low, or weak. One of the relationships it points to is that between the dominance arising from the *quantity* of low painting (with its contrary tendency to that which is a priori of value, or to put it better of advantage; after all this is an easily-defined sign of painting) and the dominance arising from the *strong referent* of bad painting (all painting today, after conceptual art, is bad painting, which has played down the sign at the expense of a work's good structure or process). Neither–nor is what's taking place, between bad–bad; *LI*.

The conscious continuation of bad painting (as opposed to any painting that is today in principle “a post–underplaying of signs”) is now counterfeiting truly bad painting, and thus in some sense helping it get established, and not just at the painting level of consistency – within more special consistencies too (artist, environment, painting problem), this approach may be critical. Yet such painting is relatively rare.⁶ We consider painting to be bad if it is “too real”, in relation to painting it is captivating, in that it enables play, and in

6 See for instance work by Nicolas Ceccaldi, or just Michael Krebber's piece



Vestibule on Vilová Street, 2017, acrylic on canvas, 140x100 cm, 55 1/8x39 3/8 in

the broader sense playing or representing painting. So much for the “state of painting”.

Who, for instance, is a Llow painting artist?

Sometimes a person, to put it bluntly, feels hapless, i.e. someone worried about his or her life that can't be unworried, thus becoming repulsive to others for not being able to control him/herself, because of not being able to control his/her life. You can't achieve happiness by your own innocence, but those who are happy are often seen by others as being guilty of something. But a person feels hapless even in a position of battling against too many alternatives, as Carl Einstein said of himself.

In a series from 2014 – 2015 after her schooling, exhibited under the title *At peace*, AB portrays someone who's becoming hapless in spite of mental and emotional maturity and sensitivity: becoming a “servant” (in the picture *At Work*, 2014), which is the most perfect articulation of the principle of work. Yet she inverts it, with a raised head, averted eyes, a finger pointing to herself, making of herself a paradoxically proud servant.

AB would seem to have undergone a lack of trust in culture, because it fails to satisfy/delegate its exclusivity at the socio-economic level; from there it's not far to not trusting what is intellectual – such intellectual as brings haplessness. Becoming hapless thanks to a career in art. An art career leading to poverty. Perhaps this is the reality of central European intellectuals.

Her *At peace* series is compelling in what it shows itself to, and what it conveys: in our country there is a countermovement to that of the tragic poor central European artist, in the form of the success of Csudai's

studio; to mask even from oneself that the artist knows more. This is an alternative, a simulation, in a capitalistic age, compared to the alternative of Bratislava's conceptualists under communism: not becoming unhappy and abject because of one's own sensitivity.

Compared to this movement, to be hapless means losing respect socially.

Perhaps AB as an artist, and through her paintings, symbolizes the unique shadow cast by the Csudai school (for the current state of Llow painting we might look more thoroughly at all the forgotten artists of the Csudai school): the artist had not reached the socio-economic level of Artist, rather, the artist had become a Servant, a Cleaner, and by this reversal made manifest the implicit machismo of the Csudai school – becoming an Artist. That which she anyway retained in similarity to this school is the mentioned lack of trust in the intellectual, the cultural – the critical that is on the borderline of not-quite-distaste for her own pretension to success, but is disappointment at the conditions that culture offers to life's enticements. The contradiction, between what now seems the advantageous *artist lifestyle* and the creation of art, is a humbled rendition of the contradiction between modernist utopias and the work of art.⁷ AB's motion, falling, has its own dimension, and it's not trivial.

Václav Magid writes: *The deepest and most shameful mystery of your secret wishes is the fact that they are not especially different from the secret wishes of anyone else.*

So this servant cannot become the “servant of painting”, but did become a painting servant, which allows her the perspective that she is indeed exclusive in some way, as in the picture *Lady of*



7 See Adorno's Aesthetic Theory.



Smoker II, 2014, acrylic on canvas,
30 x 24 cm, 11 13/16 x 9 29/64 in

the House (2014), where a rich interior is depicted with a portrait of the owner, an unattainable alter ego. Here again is a kind of intellectual “fate”, possibly particular to the golden age of internet youth: we see more of a different, better life than we can in fact live, more possibilities that at first glance don't seem impossible in the given setting. We see more culture, and our vista is much greater than the culture of the indoors that surround us, that is of the places we must live. Economic success and artistic ability and sensitivity are not the same thing, but in every environment it's a bit different: AB shows “our” characteristic contradiction. Remember her picture *Skyscraper* (2016) as a view of an unattainable peace at great heights.

Many will release smoke only in fantasies of their grand homes (with the languor of inadvertent perusing of an art work), they need not perceive it, which shows that the relationship to the interior here articulates the relationship to the picture; in long gloves, the figure in the picture, the artist, and the spectator are connected in a cold approach to the work; like an aging female idol for women (recall the aforementioned picture from the same *Smoker* series, 2014) in the picture *Smoker II* (2014) – is she looking at a picture? Or is it an “ideal owner” of AB pictures? Or an effort at attracting such: is the artist wanting to acquire that most scarce of commodities, an art collector?

AB's cold technique, leaving no trace of brushstroke, does not give rise to vitalist fantasies⁸ of the artist's sociability and corporeality. Structurally however they are

- 8 Vitalist fantasy in Isabelle Graw's lexicon means seeing social interactions and fantasies and the artist's body with everything that body carries in social space, via gesture that we do not necessarily comprehend as banal and pointed, but rather as an understanding of how something is achieved by empathizing into the artist's motion.

an analogous depiction of environment, surrounding, i.e. a place where a human being happens to be, specifically evoking vitalist fantasies; they are created, that is, at the level of motif, not of the painting process' structure. Maybe if she started “leaving tracks” she would stop depicting the immediate surroundings; this is nothing to look forward to – is that sure to be the same as the demolition of housing estates? Houellebecq writes: In the same way we realized what the public truly thinks of the architecture in which it is forced to live, all we have to do is observe how it behaves when the city decides to demolish the cage-like blocks built in the suburbs in the sixties: it's a moment of pure and highly aggressive elation, analogous to going mad from an unexpected liberation. The spirit of these places is bad, unfriendly, inhuman; it's one of the cogs in an exhausting, cruel, ever-accelerating machine; everyone feels it deep inside and wants it destroyed.

She comes closest to this in her picture *Mangalia* (2018): brittle, dried and vaporizing shapes come into sharp focus, all the more unfathomable for not falling apart, indeed even rising and holding each other up: the plant silhouette has been found/placed against a distant housing estate, like a giant collapsing monument; it's a miniature, unfaithful lesson from small-scale neo-conceptual practices.⁹

In contrast, the artist can get into situations that cloak her exploits, as in the picture *At the Bar* (2014): the portrayed alter ego is smoking, which for AB is a repeating sign of independence, but she's also pouring a drink; is she working in the “fairly lax” setting of a bar, successfully replicating this independence, or is she after work, serving herself and her friends?

- 9 Examples in the Czech and Slovak Republics include Július Koller, Jiří Kovanda, Roman Ondák, Ján Mančuška, and Milan Tittel.



Lady of the House, 2014, acrylic on
canvas, 165 x 165 cm, 64 61/64 x 64
61/64 in



Outing, 2014, acrylic on canvas, 80 x 140 cm

Maybe what's resounding from this "first" series is an essence rather like that of French cover-version pop songs from the early 2000s, the essence of camp: the dog next to the car driver in the picture *Outing* (2014). A driver's license perhaps bestows a sort of "little independence". (And why not speak of this – of independence? In this most likely lies the constant acrid tone in AB's first series after school, and in this sense it appears as provocation of ideology, but an ideology I don't want to see, because we're fostering it; we have long been its declared servants.)

In this picture, I like that we don't know (and the artist tells us with raised eyebrows: Hey! Go ahead and decide who I am!) whether she and her guard dog are on the way to her lover, using the dog as a "tough sidekick" to hand over the rose, which would be a double heightening of male/female, submissive/dominant roles; or whether she's to place the feelings encompassed in the rose from her lover in the safeguarding of her rough companion (as the dandy Beau Brummel entrusted his memory to his servant); or whether this is in fact her only companion, with whom this



At the Bar, 2014, acrylic on canvas, 50 x 50 cm

Outing will transcend the given, too-rigid assignment.

Certainly AB herself has, with her own cat's eyes in the pictures *Weakness* and *I Want to Please* (both 2014), some "dark friends", and the "dark forces" are on her side (possibly meaning the superimposition of completely conventional support, as in the picture *Pals* [2014] – young women turning the celibate nun's habit into something of the witches' domain), sometimes acting as her familiars in her independence, like the raven in the picture *My Faithful Companion* (2014). That is, if



Mangalia, 2018, acrylic on canvas, 130 x 100 cm, 51 3/16 x 39 3/8 in

they're not animals giving power before being depicted in relation to the alter ego, then they become as much, for negotiating with AB's alter ego; they know how to play on the first touch of the inscrutable. Before depiction they are animals trying to find – as does the artist's alter ego – something equally independent.

Here recall the facial expression in the picture *Protective Layer* (2014).

Of particular interest in this whole series is the picture *Weakness* (2014), which builds on Csudai's *Teddy's*: the repeated connection of melancholy and



Weakness, 2014, acrylic on canvas,
50 x 50 cm, 19 11/16 x 19 11/16 in



I Want to Please, 2014, acrylic on canvas,
50 x 50 cm, 19 11/16 x 19 11/16 in



Protective Layer, 2014, acrylic on canvas,
50 x 50 cm, 19 11/16 x 19 11/16 in

attraction; depiction as something low, which however dominates the painting – and with this, articulation of lowness departs as part of the process/structure of painting. To the contrary, domination of lowness comes across as a feeling of manipulation; a trick is a good one if it's perceptible, if we know we've been "tricked". The converse is shiftiness.

Note that *Weakness* is rendered in sharp forms; this sharpness is a style-creating element of AB's, which she was gradually to leave behind (though not altogether, as in the picture *Mangalia* (2018), or rather

she moved to a noticing of the principle of sharpness, i.e. of precision at the level of the whole composition. There were two results: an even greater independence of forms vis-à-vis what they depict, and an attention to rules.

Earlier, sharpness was an element of expression, later becoming a discovered rule: the action of a rule that is no longer a prickly negotiation about the motif; instead of form, she seeks a composition that sometimes cuts smoothly into life.

There is for instance a sharpness of AB's in the aforementioned picture

Smoker (2014) first coming out as a small piece of flesh color at the upper left, until it runs through the painting, which in many others is absent: a form somewhere other than it's supposed to be, a minute motion with a greater value somewhere else rather than showing "how it is painted". Motion as cutting in: a kind of piercing-through of forms appearing there, at the expense of what is depicted; this is present in many pictures, such as the white and brown forms in the picture *Morning* (2014), the tiny red notches at left and right in the

picture *Weakness* (2014), the arc in the turquoise in the picture *In Bed* (2014) – sharp cuts (though a different term is called for, which would combine cutting in and cutting open: something like notch-slicing), not so much for forms that don't fit together, which appears later "topsy-turvy", rather a principle of a whole picture on images spattered on paper. There's one small picture titled *Threshold* (2018) – AB always chooses format sizes exceptionally apt for their subjects, it's a sensibility analogous to taste and ability to create



Morning, 2014, acrylic on canvas,
120x100 cm, 47 1/4x39 3/8 in



In Bed, 2014, acrylic on canvas,
30x24 cm, 11 13/16x9 29/64 in



Smoker III, acrylic on canvas, canvas,
30x24 cm, 11 13/16x9 29/64 in

a “little collection” on paper – in which the cut or notch takes over the entire picture, having the function of a provocative digression. Because the forms don’t fit, we can’t stop pulling them to us, and so at length we perceive very tiny forms and relationships between them; we immerse ourselves into the distortion of order. Only in this sense does this picture have a rhythm, not for any “form rhythm” around the digression (until they get rhythm from it), but rather for the repeated beginning of perceiving it; here an unsatisfactory little quirk will serve: emptiness and pleasure.

The critical does not yield sublimation, which is why it wants to be critically produced in the same quantity as that against which it is working.

With AB the sharpness of form is not that of Holbein. Maybe this is what is most “hers”: with him it’s the sharpness of something in its place, while with AB it comes across as going beyond form. Put hyperbolically, though it is structurally similar, it’s the relationship within Renaissance figural composition: for instance I recall how the figures come together and separate on Lorenzo Lotto’s

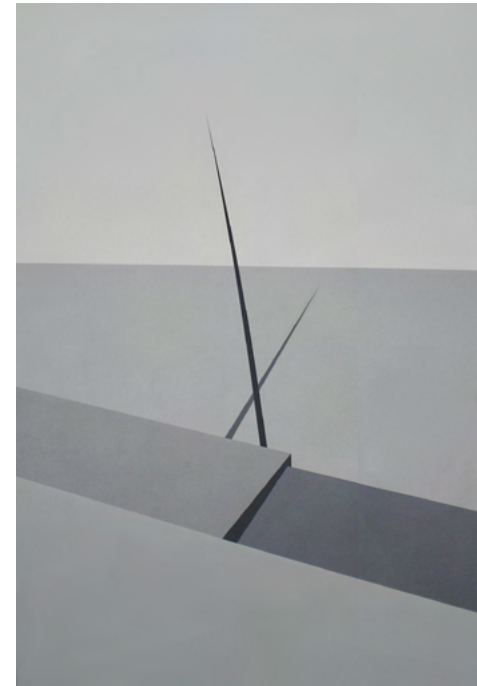
Santo Spirito altarpiece in Bergamo; with AB it takes the form of the staying power of a single little lens, a reflection in a cat’s eye. “Her” sharpness is captivating, as it is fundamentally complementary to what is sometimes a vulgarizing “precision”. Perhaps this reconciliation of that “which is in its place” and that “which goes beyond” (Zeno on the arrow in flight) is what he, or the painting machine, is about (it is

the depth of paradox that is the success); until 2020 mainly in motifs, as in the picture *Moving* (2019). Sharpness is also discernable, albeit “always approximate” (and therein lies her artistic illimitability for ekphrasis¹⁰) in the picture *Rods* (2018): it makes possible an everlasting ambiguity between shape and line, between continuing a form like a line and the form’s fall to/into the line’s edge (note what’s

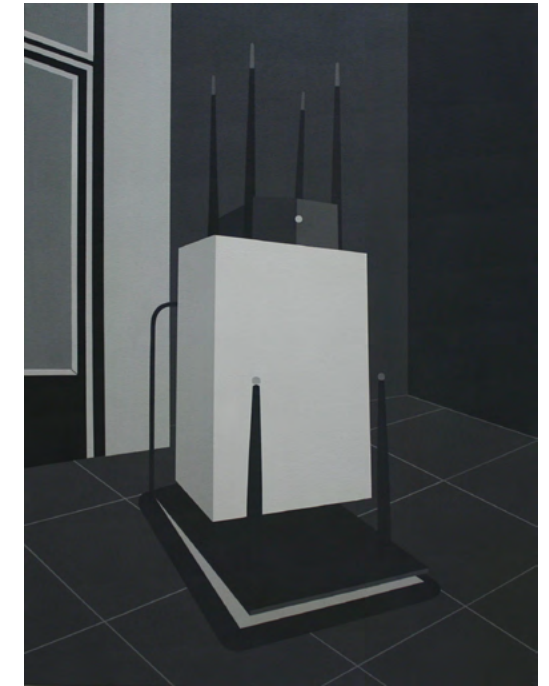
¹⁰ Ekphrasis is a written description of a work of art. Homer’s description in the *Iliad* of the shield of Achilles is considered endlessly provocative imagery.



Threshold, 2018, acrylic on canvas, 40 x 30 cm, 15 3/4 x 11 13/16 in



Rods, 2018, acrylic on canvas, 145 x 100 cm, 57 3/32 x 39 3/8 in



Moving, 2019, acrylic on canvas, 100 x 75 cm, 39 3/8 x 27 9/16 in

written of edges toward the end of this text). These cuts are something between inconsistency and waste in terms of her acrylic mode of painting – this sets them apart from illustrations.

The rules turned out for her such that she became a Servant, a cleaning woman, she's experiencing *Weakness*, she wearily gazes away from her book *In Bed*, in the *Morning* she reaches for a cigarette straight off, because this day will have no meaning; she's a *Salesgirl*, and even as she takes a little time for herself she wonders how she might get *A Few Moments* (all 2014 – 2015).

She's also the one relaxing *At Draždiak Lake*, putting make-up on (herself) because she *Wants to Please*; she's the refreshed *Smoker III* after a swim, taking time out from everyone and everything *At Rest* – the interior expanding (all 2014 – 2015).

The picture *Supper* (2014) is another one belonging to this category of "time outs": the commonplace becomes "something better", maybe just because of how it looks or how much we paid for it. Work drives away hankering.

In his book *Things: A Story of the Sixties* Georges Perec writes:



Supper, 2014, acrylic on canvas, 30 x 24 cm, 11 13/16 x 9 29/64 in

“In that respect they demonstrated the ambiguity of their situation in life. What they took to be a feast corresponded in every particular to the only kind of meals they had known for years, namely student canteen food. By dint of eating tough and wafer-thin steaks, they had taken to worshipping Chateaubriand and fillet steaks. Meat in gravy – for years they had looks askance at braised meat – did not attract them; they had too clear a memory of lumps of fat swimming around three slices of carrot in close proximity to a soggy piece of soft cheese and a spoonful of gelatinous jam. In a way, they like anything which made a show without showing it had been cooked. They liked the visible signs of abundance and riches; they would have no truck with the slow process of elaboration which turns difficult raw materials into dishes, and which implies a whole world of pans, pots, slicers, strainers and ovens. But the sight of salami almost made them faint, because it was all immediately and entirely edible...”

It's a captivating image, because it's right on the edge: the objects are the same, though they change in quality, but the quality is unobservable, indeterminate, much like the picture's value. The lamp is falsifying, but is it valuable art deco or is it Ikea? At the level of forms: as imaginary gradation of stripes, which ultimately almost meld. The blue might bring a counterpoint and with it a heightening, because counterpoint usually comes in blue versus red and green, and that would hold true if this picture was painted in only the three colors plus white, and the black wine bottle would take on the depth of mixed red and green; the knife blade would originate in the color of the bottle and, mixed with white, would in the picture have the place of local color – AB does not use these, and therefore there's a tension of joining forms that



Teabag, 2016, spray on paper, ed.8, 70 x 50 cm, 27 9/16 x 19 11/16 in



Salesgirl, 2014, acrylic on canvas,
90x70 cm, 35 7/16x27 9/16 in

is not at the level of everything reflecting in everything; thus it seems the picture was meant to come together outside of itself. What is certain however is that the bottle and sausage take on more than just a formal interlinking with what is, after all, a muted gradation of the background with white. Not even in Vermeer's work (I mention him because we cannot figure out how the forms are linked) is there a connection with local colors, but rather with a very gentle heightening of "how colors really are" in a given light; this is a curious paradox (though it doesn't fall within impressionism), because then what indeed is "definitely given"? The ochre-green stripes are one example: in a moderate shadow they look a bit grey and pinkish. Unless we know these stripes in "true light", it takes a while for us to deduce their colors correctly; in shadow they are given as a phenomenon that doesn't exist without its antecedent. When in later pictures from 2020 she "moves into the shadow", she keeps to the edge, and only the background, for example in the pictures *Chair* and *Chairs*, takes on this quality of "exchanging" (the function of linking and heightening) within the picture. In the picture *Supper* this is in the aforementioned whitespace on the products.

The products in the picture may be quite costly, or it could be an ordinary dinner that only looks expensive while the actual products are cheap. And there's a third type in between: they're expensive, we can afford them, but (and for that reason) we don't consume much. The spice of life. This economy of uncertainty regarding expensive or cheap, the preservation of the expensive and elevation of the cheap by delegating qualities not directly related to consuming, are analogies for an approach to art or the creation of pictures where work comes into time.

Perhaps weariness is the most routine mode of approach: and therefore the pictures are made to be weary? Remember the weariness of Houellebecq's heroes, while in AB they have not quite reached that state – it's as yet just a utopia to be them: to experience everything, have everything.

There is also something of this in the print *Teabag* (2016): it's some sort of better tea, which is just a slight change, but a contribution to comfort and hominess, to a feeling of security and thus a fending off of fear and life. Filled with a little pleasantness made of something better; the taste is not the issue, though we have a taste for it: many things are pleasant thanks to not perceiving their coldness: prostitution and self-rape, in the Foucauldian sense the biopower¹¹ that occurs at many levels of desire. The value of things comes immediately into their depiction, making it hard to depict the illusion of the picture's lightness, as it's much easier not to depict seeming heaviness of value and flit like a butterfly drunk with a drop of one's own self. The picture *Salesgirl* (2014) portrays the artist's alter ego, as she peddles such prints along some road, which again undermines her prints' and pictures' value; once more she is depicting gossip on the state of what pictures are worth – but by this means she gets a picture; each of us ought to be critical, and all of us are in some way interesting.

Houellebecq writes: "Neglect nothing that might procure for you a parcel of

equilibrium. In any case, happiness is not for you; this is decided, and has been for a long time. But if you can snatch up a few of its simulacra, do it. Without hesitation." Fortunately, desiring a better life is in art rendered so gently that it's quite sublimated in the wretched teabag motif.

We recall Debussy's petite piece *la plus que lente* ("more than slow"), of which he wrote his publisher: "... it's impossible to begin in the same manner in a brasserie as in a salon; there absolutely have to be some things done for preparation's sake... And then, let's not limit ourselves to brasseries. Think of the countless five-o'clock teas that bring together the beautiful audiences I've fancied." AB features marked appearances of cenobite forms (a term for a work with which one "lives in common"; a fellow monastic) in several meanings of that word: she creates works with which one can live, share space, as in the case of pictures of interiors that "at last" surround us (the picture *Doors*, 2020); lat. *pro usu interno* – for indoor, domestic use; furthermore, to cenobite belongs the feeling that it is possible to carry on living, thanks to sharing that which depicts the motif, as in the pictures *At Rest* (2014) and *On a Visit* (2016); and the spectator can also get a cenobite feeling because the artist can survive (and not lose his or her mind) thanks to making art, as in pictures inverting the experience of cleaning women: *At Work*, and *A Few Moments* (both 2014). Cenobite is a fantasy, and artists can consciously evoke it in spectators

11 Foucault's term biopower comes from his genealogy of power, as he investigated the 17th- and 18th-century examples of madhouse, prison, hospital, and school. He characterizes the modern age as that which utilizes power, in contrast with the past, imperceptibly (with no direct fear for one's life because of death sentence), and is normalizing in terms of birth rate, death, and the body and sexuality. Biopower ultimately means that man has control of himself, rather than for instance the state, but out of him derive mechanisms that are not controlled by any subject.



Doors, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 115 x 90 cm, 45 9/32 x 35 7/16 in

– sometimes even enabling the spectator to create in this way, to be an artist. Proust writes: “You will be a Chardin, less great, to be sure, but great to the extent to which you will love him, to which you will re-constitute yourself to be, like him, one for whom metal and pottery will come to life and fruits have language.”

In AB's pictures this may come about by her apparent sharing of the experience of many (for instance with the mentioned *Cabinets*, 2017) – which makes things easier, as in her paintings she exploits no furtive tricks. For spectators this feeling often comes in an opposite form: with a feeling of perfect sublimation, when they feel they no longer have to create anything; a notion of affluence: therefore once more the condition occurs of tricks and complications without creating any sense of being ponderous.

The fantasies of cenobite can also have a creative effect just among themselves (artist lifestyle), which is how the philosophy of “how to live” originates, a philosophy of artists for artists, observable in the works: those closest to this are *Smoker III*, *I Want to Please*, *Morning* and *At the Bar* (all 2014). Further types of cenobite are: it is possible to live

by painting – to sell much and cheaply, as in the picture *Salesgirl* (2014); or it is possible through these pictures to live a different kind of life, of class: *Lady of the House* (2014), a view into the interior of a rich homeowner and on her portrait anchored there. AB treats the aforesaid “female idols” as well.

Come home for a moment, there's a special kind of pictures there, by which a person can grow up; they're “super-monadological”,¹² a perfect reflection of everything exterior, at the very time we're turned toward them and not looking outside.

AB's relationship to the picture is a relationship of interior to interior, a sort of miniature camera obscura, because everything outside the interior is reflected into them, and therefore it is as if a given space in which they are presented was paradoxically invisible, and thus presents as the inside or spirit of AB. We have a powerful relationship to them, despite their negligible artistic value; it's a bit silly, but it's possible that such pictures charge themselves with art, with a thorough reflecting of external reality; we cannot distinguish between what a picture prompts and what it is charged with, what

¹² Leibniz' monad is an unrepeatable individuality. A monad is an ideal, self-contained substance, a world completely enclosed in itself and a complete representation of the universe. There is an infinite number of monads, which are emanations of God. Monads have no windows that would allow anything into them or out; they are the top floor of consciousness, to which the world has access only as a reflection or through such an optical instrument as a camera obscura. Therefore monads cannot form mutual relationships, and so must be regarded as ideal substances, as anything material is subject to divisibility. Thus the indivisible monad has no substance; it is not composed of things, but is irreducibly simple. As such, it represents a microcosm that needs nothing to complete it, and thanks to a pre-established harmony joins with infinite other monads into the macrocosm. Leibniz' term monad, in contrast to the dualism of mind and substance (Descartes), intends assert a substantial unity as the moment of origin for the world's connections.



Drying Rack, 2016, acrylic on canvas, 140 x 110 cm, 55 1/8 x 43 5/16 in

has been inserted into it. Like solipsism,¹³ the most pointed pole of subjectivism, which if it is recognized within art then it does not close us into a monad, we can however articulate a monad as a painful and insurmountable difference between external and internal; we vacillate, between satisfying ourselves with the fantasy that this is something “only we are experiencing”, and an indecipherability to others, which sometimes creates self-satisfaction because we seem unique.

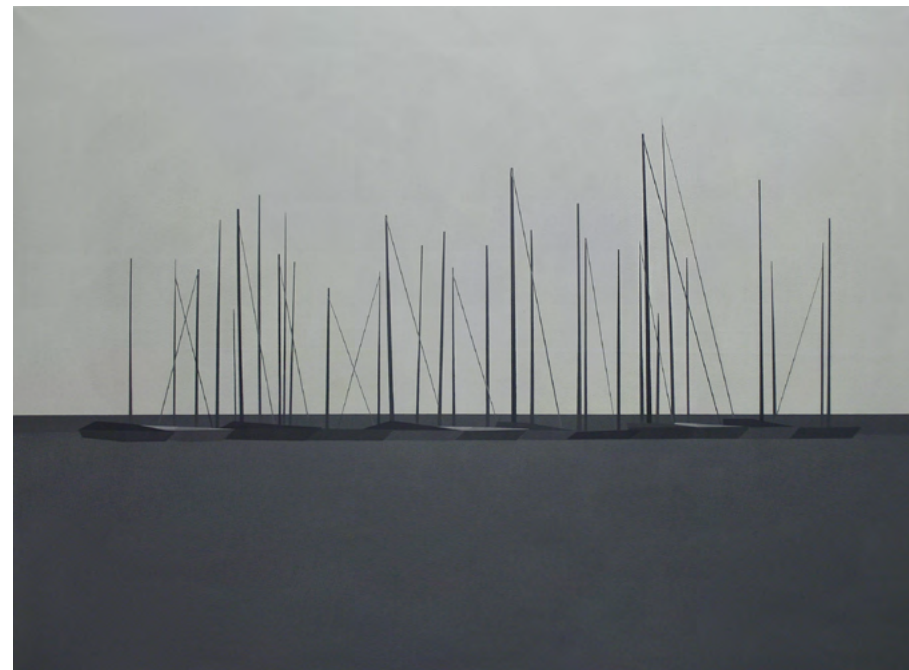
Not knowing how to trace the relationship that creates this intensive feeling is analogous to “owning the soul”; of the untouched and untouching, thus bringing back the monad.

In the escalating solipsism at the heart of cenobite is a psychotic echo of the ekphrasis problem: it becomes indiscernible whether these are just of our fantasy, or whether it's possible to trace them in material or depiction form (shield of Achilles), which again provokes formal analysis.

These pictures, just to leave their specifics silenced for the moment, are filled with feelings, although these feelings cannot by their art alone create pictures that make a long-term impression – in that they are regarded as of lesser quality, despite having high-quality placement and long timeframes. They are the core of cenobite; it makes no difference how much a fellow monastic's breath stinks: recall the end of Flaubert's story The Legend of Saint Julian the Hospitalier.

Oddly, with these pictures we experience a tick, as I do with AB's red monochrome picture *Drying Rack* from 2016 (I would just add that for me it

13 Solipsism is a philosophical teaching that acknowledges the “I” and its experience as the only true reality; everything else is just the imagination of the “I”. A notable book on this topic is Berkeley's *Three Dialogues*.



Harbor, 2019, acrylic on canvas, 120 x 165 cm, 47 1/4 x 64 61/64 in

belongs with her *Harbor* from 2019 and with the airbrushed pictures on paper *Harbor I* and *II* from 2020), being capable of a powerful cenobite action, and contrarily for me imply a long time of action. I'd like for this picture to be just as powerful for everyone. What I'd like is to push to confirm that what she does for me is not uncoupled with how she does it (the opposite is true); if I cannot get this acknowledgement, then I want it to be in every household.

And if even that's not possible, then I'll make AB pastiche—photographs, which

will be all but indistinguishable from her last pictures in 2020. Proust on Flaubert: In the same way, regarding Flaubertian intoxication, I cannot sufficiently recommend to writers the purging, exorcising effect of pastiche. As soon as we finish reading a book (author's note: repeated perusing, retaining, and therefore developing pictures) not only do we wish to continue living with its characters... but also our inner voice, which has been schooled for the whole reading to keep to the rhythm of some Balzac or Flaubert, wishes to keep speaking like them. This



On a Visit I, 2016, acrylic on canvas,
30 x 24 cm, 11 13/16 x 9 29/64 in

must be given free rein a while, to allow the pedal to prolong this sound, that is to say to make an intentional pastiche, in order to become original once more, and not to make endless unintentional pastiche.

Cenobite is perhaps most interesting in the moment of determining some picture that we find it in, in the instant it brings out the “scent of home”, or all that is “outside us” (how fragile a person is when being served as in the picture *On a Visit 2*, 2016), outside people at home, or even the dank solitude that can be in some way opposite to self-satisfaction, as it is opposite (if we don’t consider her own monographic level of consistency) in the picture *At Rest* (2014).

AB’s pictures indoors seem to be “always on”, meaning they affect how we see what is around them, in contrast to pictures indoors that we notice only occasionally, as they flash and hum.

(With time in the case of AB’s pictures we start to see these motifs all around us; as Wilde says: if there were no paintings we wouldn’t see all those sunsets.)

Yet they bear a broader difference, which Wölfflin describes as one he sees in two lines in art history: of the linear, bearing the “being” of the object, and of the painter, portraying a semblance (the optic being where people come together physiologically). (Vermeer is in my opinion somewhere right in between; as noted above: relationships come about between things, but we’re not sure they’re there at all). Wölfflin draws attention to this not being a distinction that philosophers would approve of; he borrowed the vocabulary of description based on formal differences. These two lines weave together and shoot questions at each other (note also that Deleuze would say the painting machines that consider them would expect answers that are impossible, irreconcilable, for the

given line): what in the line of being can happen/change in the picture?

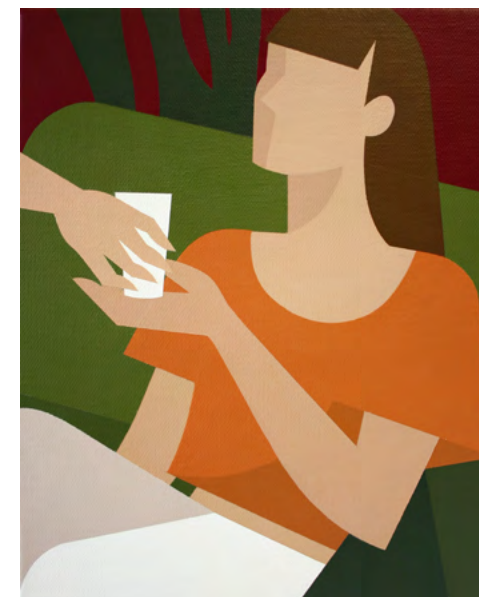
And how is being/state of change shown/proved?

The line of “how it is” (as an example recall just Holbein and the tone of his green backgrounds, similar in AB’s pictures *Untitled* and *Book*, both 2020) is sometimes a sadistic call for that which is outside of us, but it doesn’t intend another person, rather look at something outside yourself that you cannot influence; in contrast to those that are phenomenological, we connect to these pictures by our not connecting. In this sense, the acrylic and airbrush technique in AB’s painting articulates the givens and rules of the surrounding spaces, of a hard-to-influence socio-economic situation (in which we do connect); a hard-to-influence aesthetic, which is why it seems every beauty she finds reflects back to the artist as an indictment.

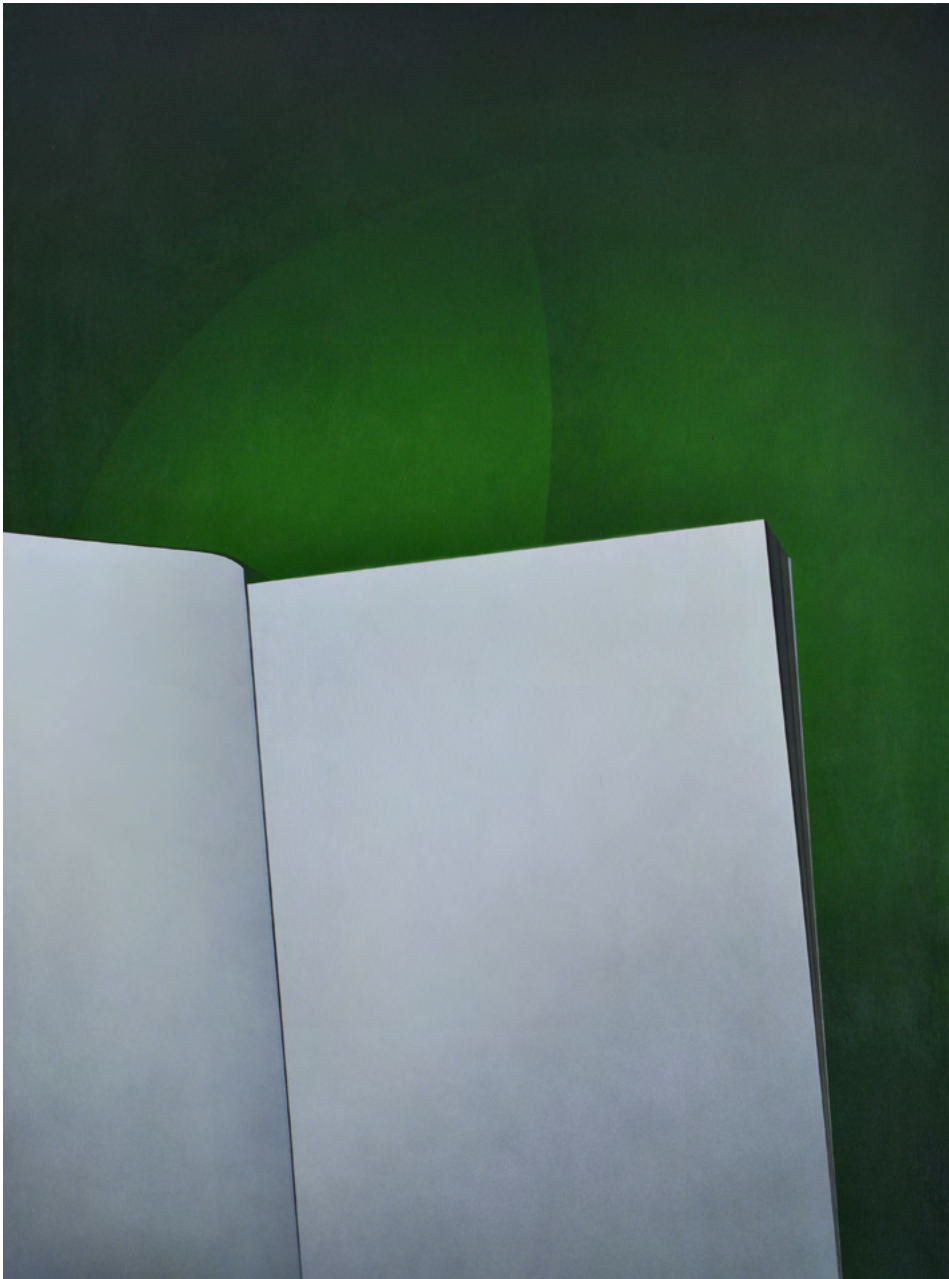
What does imagination mean in AB’s work? Of what distance does she dream?

Will AB one day be like Flaubert, whom friends made fun of because of his imaginary journey to the Orient at a cost of many millions?

I recall Flaubert’s *Salammbô*: “The festival was to last all night, and candelabra with many branches were planted like trees upon the painted woollen tapestries that covered the low tables. Large flagons of electrum, amphoras of blue glass, tortoise-shell spoons, and small round loaves, crowded between the double row of plates bordered with pearls; clusters of grapes with their leaves like thyrsi entwined vine-stocks; blocks of snow were melting in ebony salvers; lemons, pomegranates, gourds, and water-melons, were piled in hillocks beneath the tall, massive argentries; wild boars with open jaws wallowed in the dust of spices; hares cooked whole, covered with their fur,



On a Visit II, 2016, acrylic on canvas,
30 x 24 cm, 11 13/16 x 9 29/64 in



Book, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 120 x 90 cm, 47 1/4 x 35 7/16 in



Untitled, 2020, acrylic on canvas,
70 x 50 cm, 27 9/16 x 19 11/16 in

seemed to leap between the flowers; shells were filled with forced meats; pasties were baked in symbolic forms; and when the dish-covers were first withdrawn, live doves flew out."

From the perspective of those that are phenomenological, in comparison to the physical it is problematic that they show "only a state", i.e. (it would seem) not a change. In this persistence, they may come across as forced; and from this the impermanence of the exhibited picture indoors may give rise to a feeling of weariness, removed by the work's

preciousness or by the depiction of the unattainable, for instance of a luxurious reality: expensive fabric. As they are always on (they anticipate a habit of showing a state) they reflect, and with time feed the outside world, resulting in ignoring or melding with the interior. A house pet. And so their ability to change reality sometimes makes it hard to live with them in the same space.

... as in the toilet spaces in pictures on paper from the *Notabilia* series. Because of a near perspective, the tiny spaces of the toilets creates an "abstract" form-oriented



Notabilia nr.2, 2018, spray on paper,
ed.6, 29,7x21 cm, 11 11/16x81 7/64 in



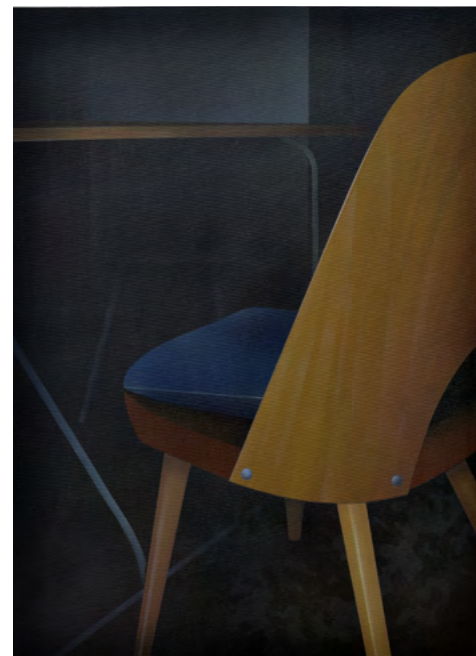
Notabilia nr.3, 2018, spray on paper,
ed.6, 29,7x21 cm, 11 11/16x81 7/64 in

seeing, and the spectator truly gets to know part of the space at the nearness, and thus from the distance, that applies on the toilet.

It is for this playing with distancing that these pictures on paper are notable, as they create a virtual given regarding space; there occurs between the pictures an invisible visualization of space. Later AB was to flip this distancing principle: what is abstract, form-related, is that by which it departs from its motif, and in later pictures the spectator has the chance to realize this mostly from a distance. Thus AB is already

anticipating a move into the depth of the picture, as in three pictures of chairs and tables: *Untitled*, *Chair* and *Chairs* from 2020. In *Chair* the second rear plane takes a good long time to appear, and once it shows itself the picture loses something.

In contrast to this, toilets aptly articulate the space principle AB depicts: uninfluenceable reality, towards or in spite of which our lives occur, often yearning for a "distance" that is later found in appearing at the edge of darkness, in a departing glance (*Chairs*, 2020)... what kind of state is that for spectators to be in?



Chair, 2020, acrylic on canvas,
70x50 cm, 27 9/16x19 11/16 in

Straying from work, housework, the picture as that which we notice when in a state of activation without our having to do anything; the seeming limitlessness of powers and health, but in a slightly pointed form, carrying a feeling of satisfaction with self: the picture as something that we may but for the fullness of life (finally) need not perceive. Overcoming the incomprehensible fear of existence by relying on things, things, things in our surroundings. The picture becomes a weak or low fetish, if it's a utilitarian thing in our interiors.



Chairs, 2020, acrylic on canvas,
145x100 cm, 57 3/32x39 3/8 in

And what kind of state is repeating experience in the artist's finding motifs? What experience of experiencing in front of the picture does this implicitly suggest? These are not ideal depictions, however at the same time they are taken through the finding of a supporting point of warmth in coldness, as in the pictures *Yellow Room*, *Room*, and *Kitchen* (all from 2020). Linger, slowing down, became a "standard technique" of viewing from above, which is not far from self-satisfying, hygge, an overview that is not itself made problematic. Linger usually occurs as



Yellow room, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 40x60 cm, 15 3/4x23 5/8 in

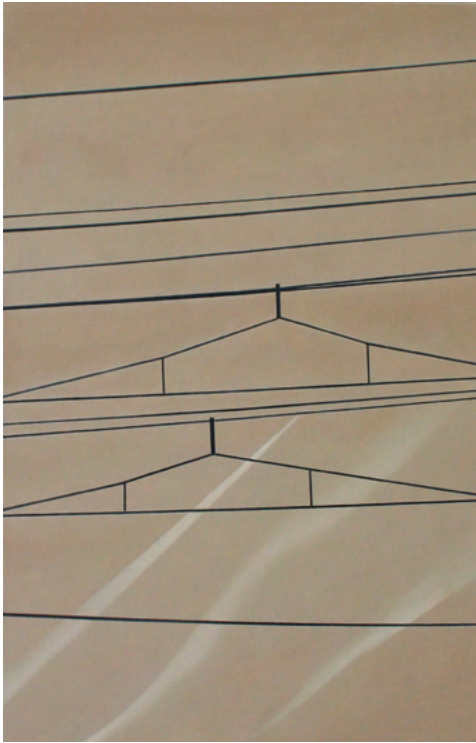


Kitchen, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 140x180 cm, 55 1/8x70 55/64 in

a showing of rules of form, of something outside us: safety, or a stranger's wink? As for instance in the picture *Electric Overhead Wires* (2018), where three white smears touch one of the wires. Note also the picture *Shelf* (2018) – the black corner deviating (from El Lissitzky), and those screws! (twisting, like the “real” into El Lissitzky). Acknowledging the utilitarian becomes provoking, paradoxical, not a smoothly–unfolding perception. Making the right black deviation, or crack, may be burdensome, it does not cry out but retracts. There must be a lot of this, but not

so much that the whole picture collapses: depicting faults in the motif might have occurred through what would have destroyed the right half of the picture.

Accepting faults: sublimation also means when something changes without our changing it. When we don't change the negative (in this sense, sublimation is connected to trauma), but despite that the feeling comes that “it's all right”. We avoid the correction of change, i.e. a kind of fake “turning back time”. Sublimation can be connected to painting itself, and its action is discernable as in the principle



Electric Overhead Wires, 2018, acrylic on canvas, 70 x 50 cm, 27 9/16 x 19 11/16 in

of the opposite motion of sublimation: the change takes place outside of us, and so sublimation isn't needed: yet it is the very action/consequence of sublimation, just like the unobservability of pleasure even when it's present. Sublimation in making art might mean the opening of the gap between work and result: I'm not sure from where AB gets the "scale of work" in the picture. Sublimation is perverse, as it does not mean exchange, but still replaces. Sublimation comes unbidden. There is no "low culture" in the sense of "the value of things", but there are things that make it possible to sublimate, if the "Id decides" – but that's narcissistic, and a problem of cenobite.

To repeat: if AB's paintings allude, with their "given" motifs determined "externally, to the socio-economic-aesthetic impossibilities of change, then is this their external referent or a possibility of changing reality, which they however assume to be a pleasant, lavish change? The change might also relate to adjusting a pillow: or is the one on the sofa already just right?

The dandy is a key figure of sublimation. Only the dandy can show off that having nothing has more value than what someone else actually owns.

Now convert this function analogously to the dandy's complement, the aristocrat: it is from this that the dandy's mystique radiates.¹⁴ A sphinx without secrets.¹⁵ Is this what AB is in certain cat's-eye pictures? The relationship between the dandy and camp aesthetic (that feel of French pop song covers) is clear – AB's picture *Outing* (2014).

¹⁴ See for example Baudelaire's essay *The Painter of Modern Life*.

¹⁵ See Wilde's narrative poem of the same name, in which a woman/object of desire creates, not so much for the hero as for her own self, a mystery/mysteries, out of nothing and seemingly for nothing.



Shelf, 2018, acrylic on canvas, 70 x 70 cm, 27 9/16 x 27 9/16 in



Unaware dandies are however a most common figure today; there is a dandification, a cooling, a masking...

Yet where I see AB's relationship to dandies is in dandies having an intense awareness of their standing, and articulating it so thoroughly it becomes absurd – as in the aforementioned *At Work* (2014). At that point they begin to seem incomprehensible, in every sense, for the dominant. King George IV could never be an aristocrat to Brummel. The powerful become ridiculous when they want to become dandies: they don't know how not to have power. The only power of the weak or low is that the powerful can't be weak – and if they ever come to know it, then they become dark forces for the strong: the well-off cannot be as tired as a servant after work, as in AB's pictures *Smoker III*, *In Bed* and *Morning* (from 2014 – 2015).

In contrast, AB longs to be weary, albeit as an independent woman; she creates this fantasy in the picture *At Rest* (2014). Notice too what is unfortunately the only perverse campy¹⁶ picture since then, *Big Girl* (2014).

Also characteristic of dandies is a zero motion, no geometry of moving, but such a manner that even so can reverse things and be critical, for example by humoring the contrary. The zero motion that turns

the picture is present in the motif of a cold housing estate and near surroundings, yet what sociability, what game originates here? What figure is the artist becoming, what game is she playing and against whom? Our environment is often too sparse for dandies to arise in it – they have no one to play; sad, sad dandies – we're not interesting for the dominant people, and for clowns the conditions given are destructive. The quantity of figures in our environment is structurally impossible, and so only their masks appear. Maybe even the figure, "one of many", is a mask, just for creating luxury goods, pictures.

Even if the artist has been variously battered, we can still write in the chronological-monographic mode. We still recognize the pictures as the work of a single artist (i.e. its own level of consistency), and among themselves they trace changes over time. This is connected to the fact that, if we want to write about pictures, first we have to see them in our memory and connect them there, i.e. simply to commit them to memory, and perhaps that's what makes for the professional in writing.

Seeing the artist monographically helps us notice that a picture, however banal it's depicted, can among art works – now at the level of consistency in AB's body of

¹⁶ Camp is a term of Susan Sontag's, expressed through numerous examples in her *Notes on Camp* from 1964. *Camp*, similar to *informe*, is a term hard to pinpoint, as "whether something is campy" can only be judged in a specific case. I think a good example is the thrill the secessionist artists took in creating "nature", and how seriously they took it – camp is not intentionally frivolous, but accepts the unbelievable. Camp is not kitsch, but we enjoy it as something decadent, and this is supposed to prove our ability to recognize that which is truly good. In this text on AB, the example for camp used is that of "French cover-version pop songs", as this reveals the difference between how insiders and outsiders perceive the language: outsiders may laugh at the insiders because their language may seem ridiculous, but insiders take it as something serious and true.



Autobus, 2018, acrylic on canvas,
145x110 cm, 57 3/32x43 5/16 in



Waterfront, 2018, acrylic on canvas,
145x100 cm, 57 3/32x39 3/8 in



Ladder, 2018, acrylic on canvas,
165x120 cm, 64 61/64x47 1/4 in



Refrigerator, 2017, acrylic on canvas,
160x110 cm, 62 63/64x43 5/16 in

work – be something different, comprise something different. Remember her pictures *Protective Layer* and *Weakness* (both 2014); in her context, these are “entirely different”. “We don’t always see” all pictures at once. That’s what creates their contextuality. No context is in advance given in a different sense. When we realize finitude, i.e. the non-infinity of relationships of pictures to each other, then the relationships of pictures to each other are not currently unlimited.

I wanted to write of AB in two lines: pictures that stand out from her body of

work so far, and a second line of finding her most inconspicuous picture.

I believe the first include the pictures *Big Girl* (2014) for the presence of switching male/female relationships, *Smoker* (2014) because it is in something an idol of woman (more on this above), *Skyscraper* (2016) for its suddenly discovering the question of whether this is a real view, and the pictures *Untitled* (2020) for absolutely different composition, *Antennas / Verona* (2019) for a light not occurring in other pictures, and *Weakness* because it puts spectators in a different place than the usual, or rather

articulates trust and mistrust, i.e. that which is latently present in the artist’s pictures. On the other hand some would say her pictures are about loneliness or emptiness. For trust and mistrust and their balancing, i.e. that which is still foreign and not unpleasant, and strange that becomes pleasant; these pictures become dandies in principle: ironically the picture *Comfort*, and *Living Room*, *Portal*, and *Yellow Room* (all from 2020).

In the second line, of inconspicuous pictures that are easy to forget, I’m looking for the picture I’m sure to forget, which

I’ve already forgotten (and so don’t forget: for which of its qualities?). Wouldn’t it be exciting to know how consistently to make such pictures, which are sure not to remain in any way in the memory?

Within AB’s body of work until now, such will not be the pictures *Protective Layer* (2014) or *Shelf* (2018) – these are rather overtly inconspicuous, like the digression in the picture *Threshold* (2018), as they disclose when we realize how their forms come together. From her body of work, I regard the pictures “on the edge” to be those that we would



Francisco Goya, Self portrait with spectacles, (c.1800)

label experimental; I'm trying not to look through a phenomenological lens. I'm not certain how synthesizing takes place in a painting of "physical state" and whether there is any place for it, but there is motion here (a value of motion within the painting). Remember Duchamp's precision, and vis-à-vis this the steady interest in motion. In contrast to this, in her pictures featuring fans, like *Drying Rack* (2016) and *Fan* (2017) – the airbrush on (housing estate) laminate disperses (sic!) the atmosphere indoors: the finding of these pictures occurs in motion, and gets subtly

into them too (to the extent that here there occurs a fundamental relationship to photographs by El Lissitzky and Moholy-Nagy: negotiation in a complementary motion compared to that which the "objects demand"; a diagonal and a fall... of books from the *Shelf* (2018). In this, the most significant picture reproduced here is *Untitled* from 2020. At the level of motifs she was doing this particularly in 2018 and 2019. One example is the picture *Moving* (2019), where the objects are still just "put together" opposite each other, ready for their journey. AB's body of work



Vestibule I, 2016, acrylic on canvas, 80 x 60 cm, 31 1/2 x 23 5/8 in

includes many edgy pictures, such as: *Steps to Terrace* (2017), *Boundary* (2017), *Shelf* (2018), and *Autobus* (2018). (No one is going on any trip. The bus is depicted as parked, with no traveler or bus on their way. The bus stands still. We look at the bus like those who are just coming "to the bus". We move opposite its path, in a contrary diagonal.) Then there are *Threshold* (2018), *Waterfront* (2018), and *Ladder* (2018) – an especially edgy picture, the ladder within the painting here as a reverse, i.e. as that which AB did not make by painting, and it's a palimpsest; the painting is not layered,



Vestibule II, 2016, acrylic on canvas, 70 x 50 cm, 27 9/16 x 19 11/16 in

but the motif is palimpsest. The reverse or negative of motif vis-à-vis the rendering. There follow the works *Roof* (2020), *Low Wall* (2020), and *Portal* (2020). They are perhaps the articulation of a state of transitioning from "noticing" the motif itself to the level of forms; they are the gentlest of pictures, which however may be in some way hard and seizing, as in the picture *Untitled* (2020), giving rise to a string of "chair" pictures (*Chair, Chairs*, 2020): "seizing up" as one bends over, encompassing a second plane, a depth. Stopping at an unexpected moment.

With the picture *Untitled*, I always recollect Goya's 1801 self-portrait with spectacles, which looks like the first digital. Yet that is Didi-Huberman's anachronistic view – or rather maybe a metaleptic view? This leads to our deducing in retrospect because of a similarity between the digital and Goya's somewhat digital qualities, or conjecture. It is in essence speculative realism, a retrospective art history fantastical. By comparison Goya's pictorial principles and the transformations in his work no longer surprise me, but perhaps that artist will who encompasses everything future over several years for everything that paints.

To contrast with all these pictures, I looked for some I completely forgot about: and they are *Vestibule I* (2016), *Vestibule II* (2016), and *Refrigerator* (2017). Only in them, paradoxically, is the fullest depiction of banality. How precious their small quantity makes them!





Storage, 2018, acrylic on canvas, 65x50 cm, 25 19/32x19 11/16 in



Storage II, 2018, acrylic on canvas, 50x40cm 19 11/16x15 3/4 in



Storage, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 60x50 cm, 23 5/8x19 11/16 in



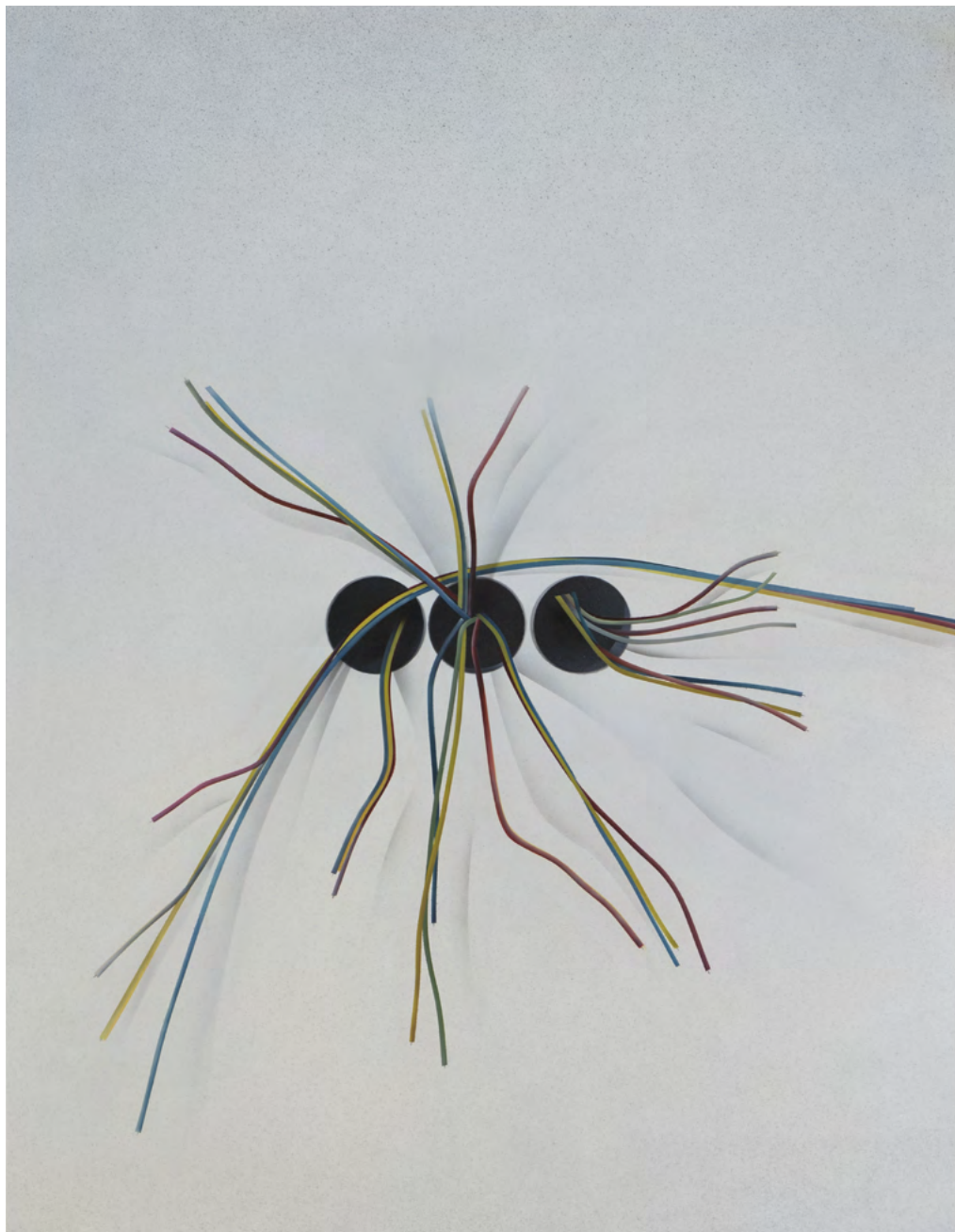
Comfort, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 130x90 cm, 51 3/16x35 7/16 in



Red beds, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 50x40 cm, 19 11/16x15 3/4 in



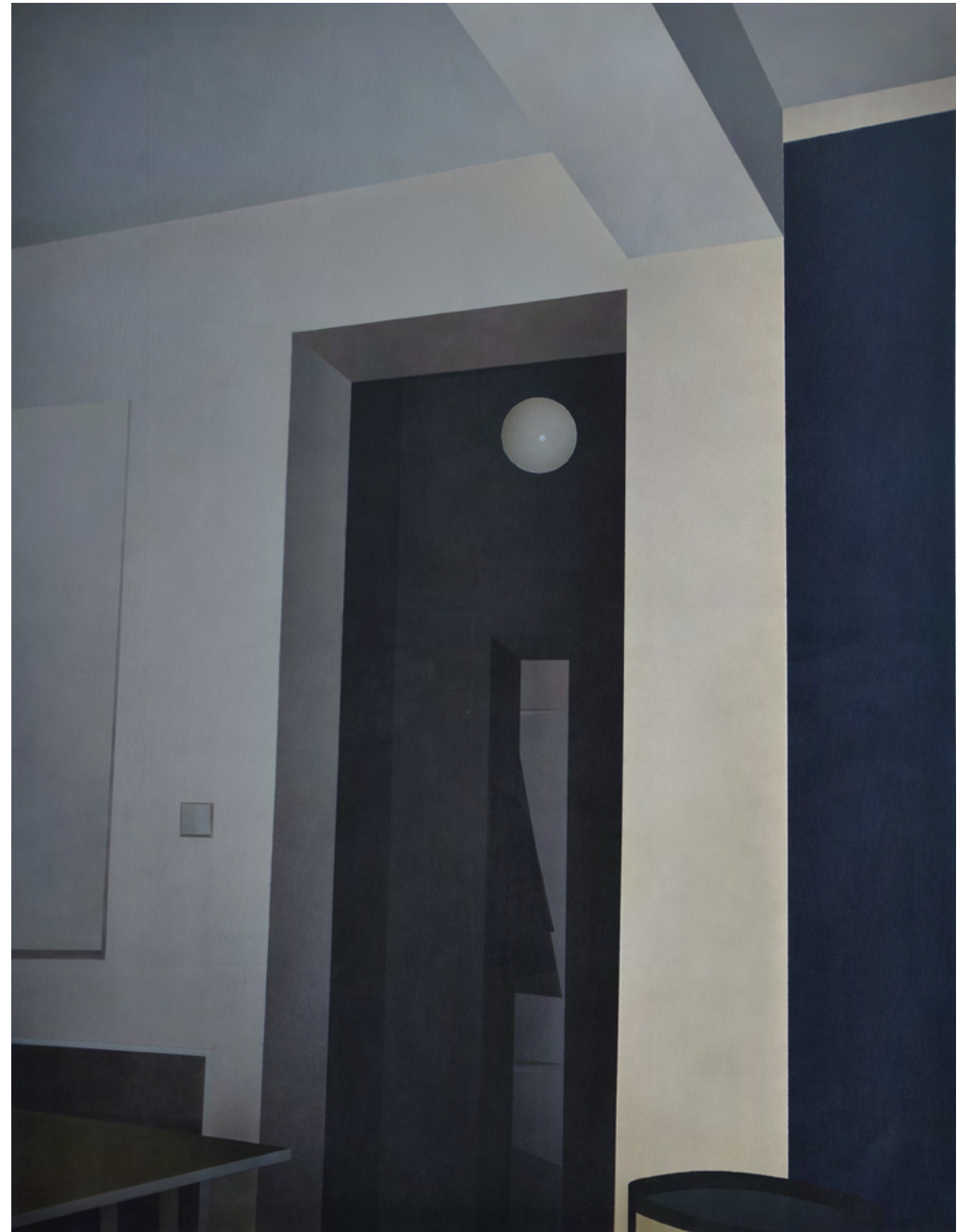
Theatre curtain, 2021, acrylic on canvas, 120x90 cm, 47 1/4x 35 7/16 in



Cables, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 130x100 cm, 51 3/16x39 3/8 in



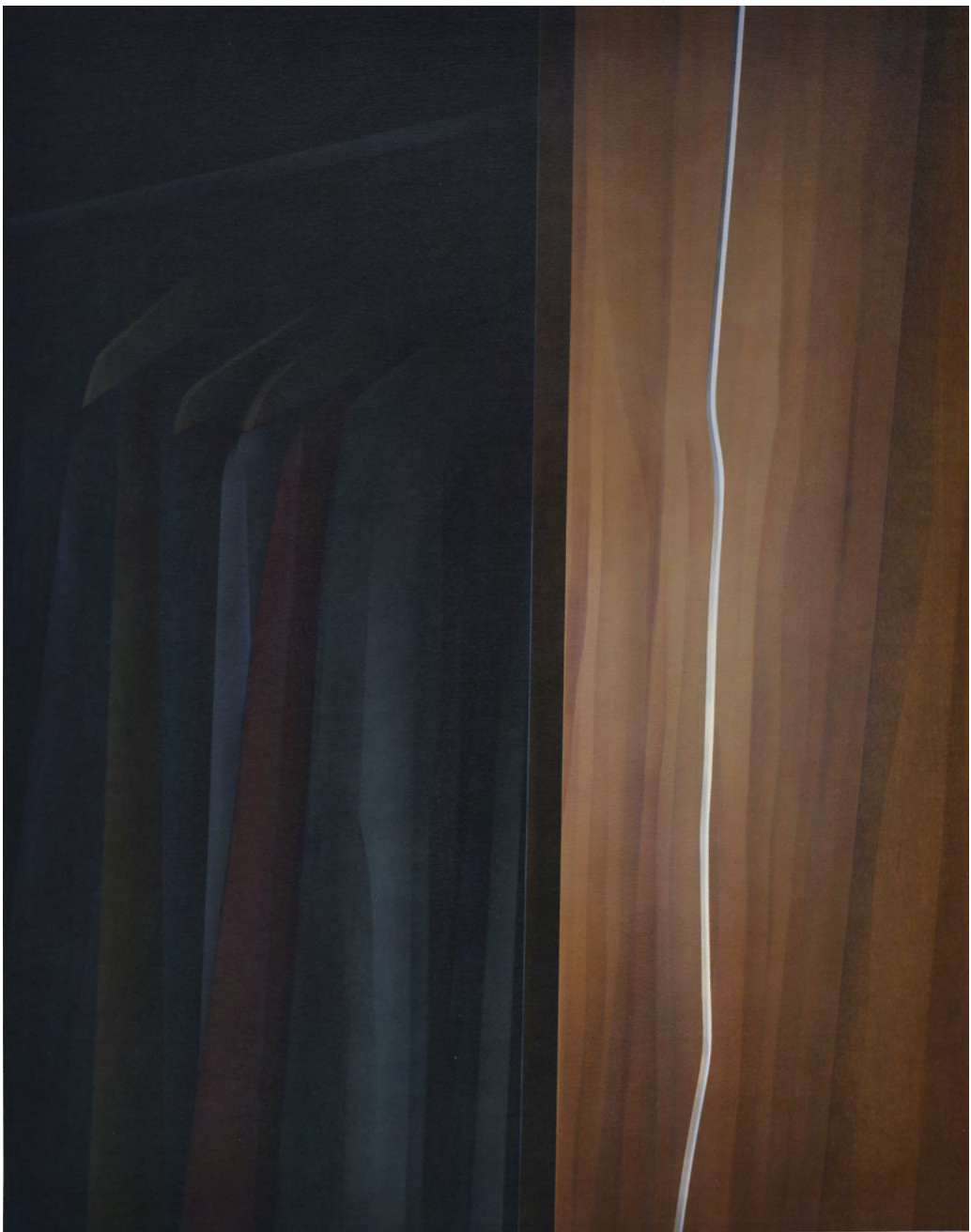
Leaves, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 150x120 cm, 59 1/16x47 1/4 in



Living room, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 130x100 cm, 51 3/16x39 3/8 in



Night, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 70x50 cm, 27 9/16x19 11/16 in



Wardrobe, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 90x70 cm, 35 7/16x 27 9/16 in



Portal, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 70x50cm



Cabinet, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 90x70 cm, 35 7/16 x 27 9/16 in



Chairs, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 145x100 cm, 57 3/32x39 3/8 in



Untitled, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 70 x 50 cm, 27 9/16 x 19 11/16 in



Chair, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 70 x 50 cm, 27 9/16 x 19 11/16 in



Red armchair, 2021, acrylic on canvas, 80x60 cm 31 1/5x23 5/8 in



The carpet, 2021, acrylic on canvas, 80x60 cm, 31 1/5x23 5/8 in



TV set, 2021, acrylic on canvas, 80x60 cm, 31 1/5x23 5/8 in



Shelf, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 120 x 90 cm, 47 1/4 x 35 7/16 in



Yellow shelf, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 120 x 90 cm, 47 1/4 x 35 7/16 in



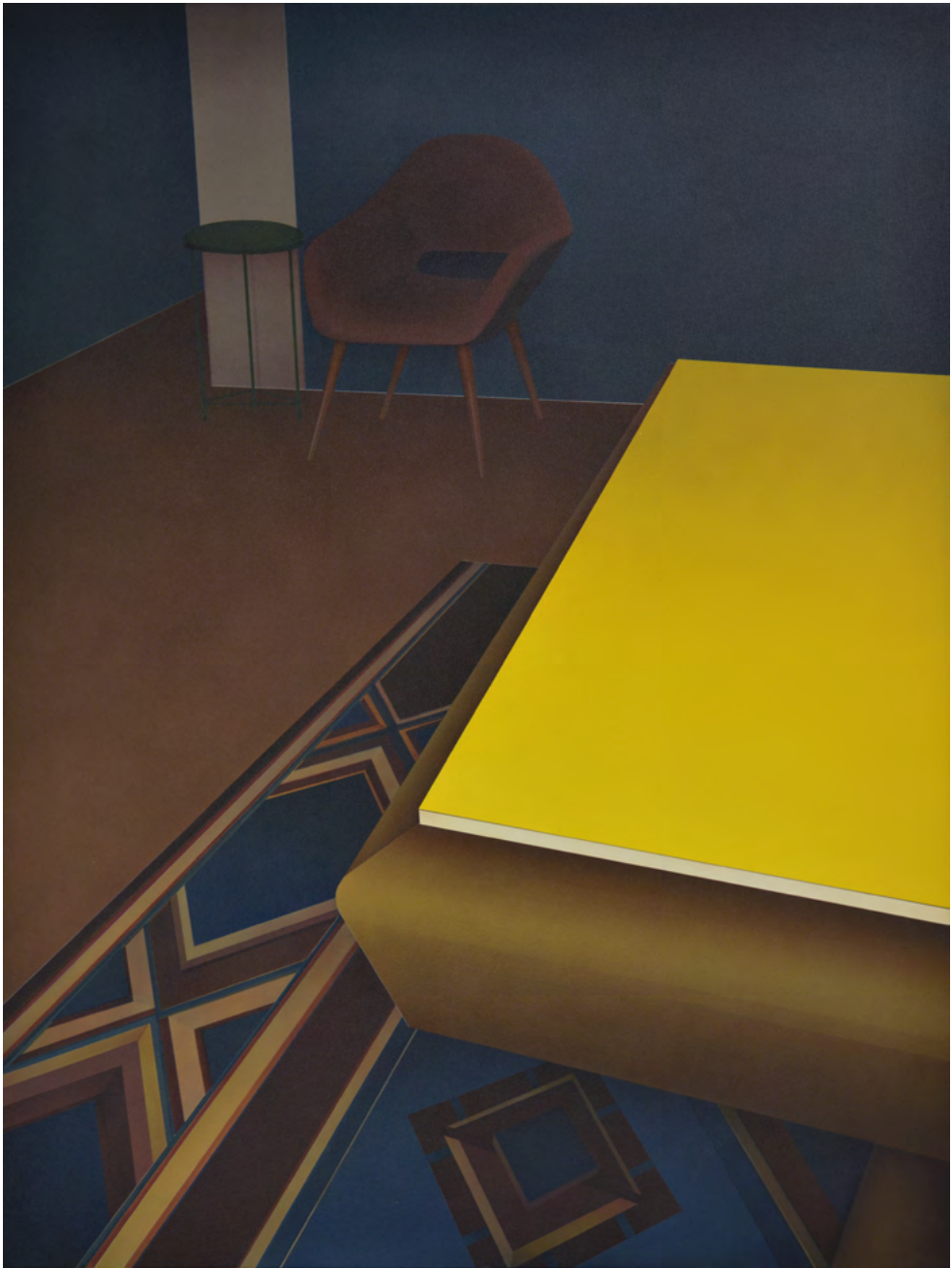
Folder, 2021, acrylic on canvas, 120x90 cm, 47 1/4x35 7/16 in



Untitled, 2021, acrylic on canvas, 70x50 cm, 27 9/16x19 11/16 in



White tablecloth, 2021, acrylic on canvas, 80 x 60 cm, 31 1/5 x 23 5/8 in



Yellow table, 2021, acrylic on canvas, 120 x 90 cm, 47 1/4 x 35 7/16 in



Down the stairs, 2021, acrylic on canvas, 160x120 cm, 62 63/64x47 1/4 in

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