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AMY BESSONE

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Reviews

DAVID KORDANSKY - LOS ANGELES

How does it affect the work's interpretation when a contemporary female artist invokes the curvy models and signature brushwork of Picasso and Matisse? Is it a subversively feminist gesture, if there isn't an overt statement made about the tradition of the male artist's gaze? Amy Bessone's paintings at David Kordansky — consisting of ink and watercolor studies on paper and corresponding large oil paintings on canvas — raise such provocative questions.



AMY BESSONE, *Dancing Girl is Four Heads High*, 2010. Installation view at David Kordansky, Los Angeles. Courtesy David Kordansky, Los Angeles. Photo: Fredrik Nilsen. AMY BESSONE, *Night Nurse*, 2010. Oil on canvas, 165 x 198 cm. Courtesy David Kordansky, Los Angeles. Photo: Fredrik Nilsen.

Each slouchy or vampy siren in Bessone's gestural paintings seems comfortable in her own skin. Never mind that her face may be slashed with mask-like markings or her body parts too short, long, fat or skinny. Bessone is deliberately messing with the figurative artist's strategy of counting heads to measure a model's height and other physical attributes. While the classic rule is seven-heads high, several of Bessone's subjects stand only four, and yet manage to appear almost natural. Exaggeration in figure drawing doesn't have to be calculated in order to be perfectly valid — even Picasso and Matisse proved that. Bessone, like plenty of artists, wants to be free to make bold marks on white or color-saturated grounds — to let loose; an impression that also stems from considering her earlier body of work, in which she painstakingly and fluidly captured the seductive surfaces of porcelain figurines. Compared to those earlier paintings, these are quite a departure. Although they have been well received, I'm not as convinced that the artist has arrived at something that feels entirely hers. Given her draftsmanship, her ability to conceptualize and identify precedents to push further and the originality of that earlier work, these don't seem quite there yet. The influence of early modernism either hasn't motivated her passions or sparked a response that truly privileges her considerable talent.