

ARTFORUM (web), March 2012

## ARTFORUM

### Amy Bessone

VENEKLASEN WERNER (VW)

Rudi-Dutschke-Strasse 26

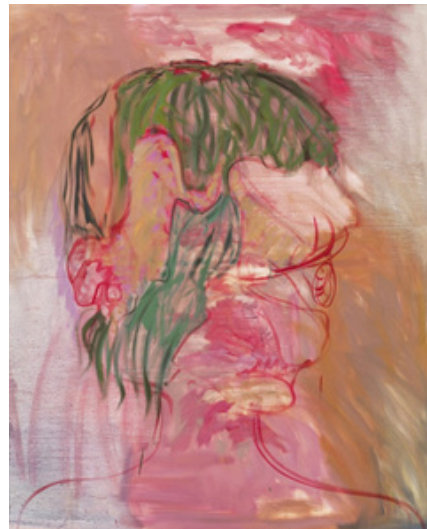
March 2–April 21

Amy Bessone's paintings seem to bring the chambers of consciousness into view. One could say that the Los Angeles-based artist paints mental portraits, charting currents of thought and association and revealing the chaotic, conflicted, and—at the same time—colorful world of our minds. Her current exhibition consists of fifteen paintings, all produced in 2011–12, with the eye as leitmotif. Sometimes this eye is part of a face, and sometimes it appears independently, or as the sense organ of some indefinable creature.

One of the most attractive aspects of these works is the freedom of their palette and draftsmanship; they have energy, color, and flair. Furthermore, they are often suggestive of modern masters: Picasso with his multifaceted portraits, the eyes and hands of Philip Guston, or the Surrealists with their interest in desire. Allusions like these form the keynotes of the exhibition, over which Bessone occasionally bursts into music all her own. This leads to beautiful pieces such as the transparent *Portrait*, in which thin layers of color create an existential image, and *Happysad* (MK), an artful balancing act between joy and sorrow, and between a recognizable portrait and abstraction. There's also the unruly *Papapau*, with a face resembling an explosive cloud.

Some paintings, such as *Untitled (Brother)* and *Garden Variety*, come across as more lighthearted and less focused. But the exhibition as a whole does honor to the painter's art. Bessone combines consciousness with art-historical lineages and summons, ultimately, the direct, visceral pleasure of painting.

*Translated from Dutch by David McKay.*



Amy Bessone, *Portrait*, 2011–12, oil on canvas, 96 x 78".

— Jurriaan Benschop