

Madeline Bohrer: *Blue Cows, Black Clouds*
September 12 - October 20, 2018
Opening reception: September 12, 6:00-9:00 PM



Spoonbill Studio is pleased to present *Blue Cows, Black Clouds*, solo exhibition with new works by Madeline Bohrer, curated by Madeleine Mermall.

Upon first glance, Bohrer's paintings seem to inhabit a bucolic, arcadian-esque place: fields neatly sprawl out and trees stretch towards the cloud specked sky, cows graze in lush pastures, a chateau welcomes the viewer. In one pastoral work, a church rests on a hill with wispy clouds floating by, quiet and serene. In another, a mother and daughter read in a meadow sheltered by trees, placid and innocent. The paintings, while rooted in realism, are comprised of painterly, abstracted studies of line and color--with nods to Hockney and Matisse--that converge to create the visual symbols traditionally found in idyllic landscape paintings encountered throughout history. However, the world Bohrer has created is a surreal, technicolor inversion of such scenes that are paradisiacal in their beauty and setting, though feel as if one has tumbled down the rabbit hole.

In the paintings, the rules of reality have fallen to the wayside. Colors gleefully play musical chairs, with the black spots of the cows and the blues and whites of the sky swapping places, and grass growing in an array of pinks, reds and greens, leaving inky black clouds to rest in blank white skies while blue cows stand about in polychromatic pastures. In "Chateau", the facade is comprised of flat sections of bright colors that juxtapose one another to form the structure of the building, while strategically placed lines of analogous color gives a sense of light and shadow. A pink silhouette of a woman in Victorian

dress stands out next to a dynamic palm tree, with its composition and color reminiscent of Hockney's take on the motif. The divergence of treatment from the woman to the tree is striking. The woman is stencil-like and flat, more so a ghost-like imprint upon the surface while the palm tree is detailed and sharp, its existence in the scene solidified.

Bohrer's women can be found in other paintings as well, and they are treated in a similar manner. In a pastoral scene, the blue silhouette of a mailgirl marches across a field under a black sky, with blue cows grazing beyond. Letter in hand, her person and clothing is slightly more detailed, but she still remains flat and frozen like her counterpart outside of the chateau. Another painting depicts a mother and daughter, painted in vibrant hues of pink and orange, sweetly posed together in a sea of blue grass and trees. The mother gestures to a book laid out before them while her daughter leans into her.

The depictions of the women in these paintings are drawn from antique embroidery, where women are reduced to mere symbols of a supposed ideal, stitched into their proper places and playing out their assigned roles. The Victorian hostess stationed outside of the chateau is decorative display, a formal element whose purpose is filling patriarchal expectations of an Arcadia. The sweetly dressed mail girl marches with contrived determination, though her task is menial and her image idyllically innocent. Though it may seem as if the works are representative of an antiquated, idealized place where women fulfill traditional roles, Bohrer reclaims the landscape through formal elements. Reflective of our own reality, the artist does not fully free her women from their fates, but takes authorship over what she can, leaving us to ponder the implications of this world and its mirroring of our own.

[Bohrer](#) (b. 1992) has a BFA from Boston University and an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Bohrer is a painter whose work explores the melding of color, patterns, and humor, using femininity as a lens. Her work was recently included in a group show at the Berkshire Museum, and she spent the summer completing a residency at Centre Pompadour in France.