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**Pick of the Week: Alissa McKendrick and Diane Kotila at de boer gallery.**

By Cole Sweetwood | March 24, 2021



Untitled (2021), Alissa McKendrick, oil on canvas

Everyone has a fascination with the more macabre parts of life. Not that everyone is John Waters, but there's a reason we all slow down to look when we pass an accident. It's just human nature to be transfixed by the dark and the deadly, to find it not only shocking but enchanting. Our morbid curiosity (and the accompanying absurdity) is explored at de boer gallery until April 17th with a pair of shows by artists Diane Kotila and Alissa McKendrick: "Boy Kings" and "Electric Guitar Players."

"Electric Guitar Players" is, well, electric. An absurd, almost whimsical energy courses through the color-field landscapes, upon which women serenade skeletons and mermaids with un-plugged electric guitars. The scenes carry a mysterious cadence, drawing inspirations from places as far-flung as Narcissus's pond and Andrew Wyeth's *Christina's World* (1948). But instead of a windswept young girl on the prairie, McKendrick inserts a skeleton, lounging and staring off at a distant cityscape. McKendrick experiments with death's odd familiarity, and her paintings are as finely detailed as they are expressively impressionistic.

"Boy Kings" is a series of portraits of the Egyptian Pharaoh Tutankhamen, or, affectionally, King Tut. Tutankhamen is a figure that has been perennially fascinating since the uncovering of his tomb, having taken the throne at just eight years old. The Pharaoh in Kotila's painting is just about that age, a young boy just at the precipice of his reign.

The paintings Kotila has rendered of the Tutankhamun illustrate her fascination with the ruler. They are somber, even haunting, with one's face wrapped in gauze and another just a limbless torso, covered on one side in stab wounds. The boy kings appear as Tutankhamen did in real life: frail and anxious.

Kotila works to bring back the Pharaoh, but the most striking portrait is not of Tutankhamun, but of the boy who rediscovered him. Hussein Abdel Rasoul, the boy who discovered the first step to Tutankhamun's tomb and once wore the jewelry of the Pharaoh, is recreated by Kotila. But with those shadowed eyes and the sensation of weight upon his shoulders, the line between Rasoul and Tutankhamun blurs.

de boer gallery  
3311 E. Pico Blvd, LA, CA, 90023  
Thru Apr. 17, 2021