

# NICELLE BEAUCHENE GALLERY

**Alan Reid**

*Cellar Door*

September 22 - October 29, 2022

Opening reception September 22, 6-8 PM

Nicelle Beauchene is pleased to present *Cellar Door*, a project space exhibition with Brooklyn-based artist Alan Reid.

Alan Reid's meticulous acrylic on linen paintings amalgamate traditional painting and illustration techniques with varied references from histories of design, architecture, and art. Direct observational painting, airbrushed details, and a repertoire of pochoir illustration commingle to produce tromp l'oil textures of fabric or folds of paper; rendered photoshop collage; dye stains and spatters. Language commands each composition through beguiling single words and short phrases, the messaging dressed in dutiful typefaces. Reid's paintings suggest an attention to the mechanics of painting as an object, posing structural queries into the poetics of image-making.

**Alan Reid** (b. 1976, Texas) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. He has had solo exhibitions at Mary Mary, Glasgow; Lisa Cooley, New York; A Palazzo Gallery, Brescia and Patricia Low, Gstaad. Group exhibitions include Miguel Abreu, New York; Situations, New York; Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, New York; Jacky Strenz, Frankfurt; Poker Flats, Williamstown; and Inman Gallery, Houston, among others.

His monograph *Warm Equations* was published in 2016 by Edition Patrick Frey.



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The exhibition is called *Cellar Door*; which is purportedly the most phono-aesthetic phrase in the English language, and a lot has been written to shore up the claim; for brevity, Don DeLillo, here interviewed in Paris Review, 1993:

There's something nearly mystical about certain words and phrases that float through our lives. It's computer mysticism. Words that are computer generated to be used on products that might be sold anywhere from Japan to Denmark—words devised to be pronounceable in a hundred languages. And when you detach one of these words from the product it was designed to serve, the word acquires a chantlike quality. Years ago somebody decided—I don't know how this conclusion was reached—that the most beautiful phrase in the English language was *cellar door*. If you concentrate on the sound, if you disassociate the words from the object they denote, and if you say the words over and over, they become a sort of higher Esperanto. This is how *Toyota Celica* began its life. It was pure chant at the beginning. Then they had to find an object to accommodate the words.

I can't say precisely what this has to do with my paintings, but if you follow the elliptic suggestion, naming things and obliqueness won't cancel each other out. This is how painting works, too. It's specific, yet open.

Some phrases unexpectedly baffle me. I love the names of racehorses for this characteristic: their linguistic exuberance. A racehorse's name is always a little unhinged, despite the formal naming rules (less than 18 characters, no numbers, etc.) A foal refers to both mare and stud, so *Round Number* and *West Was Won* might result in *Circling the Wagon*.

Of course, the whole of language rumbles along like this, semi-chaotically, just under our mental traffic. Words press into us, with their structure, with their geometry. With implications.

Having entirely begun as undetermined mouth sound, words also retain some tertiary character of sound pressure. As sonic event and as performance. *Cellar* requires a quick, confident tongue and gymnastic accuracy. It seemingly dissolves in a prolonged *elle*, almost becoming *allure*. At *door* the tongue returns to touch the teeth but demurely, and backs away. Sinister *Corridor*.

One can't say anything about beauty, I know. And yet, there are fissures in concepts, in associations, and in words. The fissures can be attended to. Through etymology, for instance, the evolutionary magnitude of our utterances can be observed, traced across centuries. We echo what we cannot know. Etymology is the soap opera of our language. Words go through epic phases. To be broken and rebuilt, adopted, rediscovered. Loved and loathed. We do our worrying with words. But for all the cognitive advancement represented by language, the sound itself remains alien and other, marked by ancient aesthetics. Ancient belief. When we speak, our mouths fill with antediluvian preferences. The sounds which make up our words were eminently important to unknowable people and have been carried for thousands of years. At times, one can almost discern historic cognitive processing in the intimate language of our own thought.

And then, how fascinating that we display these same words to ourselves, in our internal lives, drawing them into our private mental theatre, attending to their specificity, measuring their feeling-tone, hoping for satisfaction from them.

This is all to say, I want a beginning, not an ending. We painters are lured into our work, hypnotized by a subtle insistence that significance can be brought further by form. *Press release*. Pressing. Releasing. To cultivate that pressure and touch. To let meaning proliferate and then to disseminate.

Alan Reid  
Antwerp, 2022