

joke, Kennon mischievously interpolates his viewers into this lascivious matrix, giving them no choice but to connect the dots.

Just as Bochner's 1966 work of conceptual curating "Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant to Be Viewed as Art" used the act of reproduction to challenge art's institutional authority, Kennon sought to complicate our understanding of cultural structures (the gallery group show, the Internet image archive) through the pervasive languages of print. This was not only an interesting reprise of late-'60s Conceptual art, but also a smart (and even cocky) take on the faith we put in design.

—Catherine Taft

TORONTO

Lorna Bauer

YYZ ARTISTS' OUTLET

Humble and spare, yet offering surprising nuance, the video *Four Glasses* (all works 2010) is a typical Lorna Bauer production. It begins with a view of four wineglasses on a weathered plank, precisely lit so as to be surrounded by total darkness. Almost ecclesiastically poised, these vessels anticipate a narrative incident that eventually happens: The glasses—all four at once—explode, providing the only sound and the only motion of the ninety-second work. The action barely lasts a moment but effectively sparks a full spectrum of associations, from technical experiment (were the glasses rigged to test the camera's ability to describe this split-second event?) to corny painterly iconography (innocence lost) to a stab at the absurd (normally wineglasses offer alcohol, not anxiety), mixed with the impression that Bauer wishes to play with the notions of integrity and coherence, and not only with regard to aesthetic form.

This was further demonstrated by the exhibition's titular digital photograph, *What Is Not But Could Be If*. From a distance the grainy, gray image appeared to depict sea and sky and little else. However, on closer examination, shadows and scuff marks emerged, ultimately revealing the wall and floor of the artist's studio. The subject of *All the Material*, another Bauer photograph, similarly appears to change state as what first seems a haphazard accumulation of shattered glass—the aftermath of so many exploding experiments soon to be swept into a dustpan—comes into focus as a sculptural body that had been handled with meticulous care: Some overlapping central shards register as opaque white; others offer transparent or translucent shades of brown, green, turquoise, and blue. The periphery of the pile is dimly



Lorna Bauer, *What Is Not But Could Be If*, 2010, color photograph, 19 x 24".

rendered, creating the illusion of expansion well beyond the reach of our vision and the illuminated area registered by the photograph.

Reflective surfaces added another layer of optical transfiguration in *Untitled*, a diptych composed of two separately framed photocollages hung in one corner of the gallery, perpendicularly, so that their edges physically met. The product of a series of experiments using studio lights and strategically placed mirrors, here a host of jagged planes generate fragmented views of a Jack Daniel's bottle. Within this heated and disorienting topological space (evocative of Robert Smithson's Enantiomorphic Chambers), the bottle shattered into glowing, spectral fragments of curving glass and printed label. Here, haunted by the formal experimentation of Cubist café scenes, the work's glaring and ghostly afterimages generated a lasting, albeit fragile, sense of wonder. Whether by flashes of light, controlled acts of violence, or shots of whiskey, Bauer ruptures the neutral, pushing us to reconsider the material reality of objects and the limits of our own perception.

—Dan Adler

LONDON

Alice Neel

WHITECHAPEL GALLERY

Alice Neel's magnificently independent art practice is remarkable for its allegiance to figuration at a time when abstraction dominated the New York world and for her intense portrayals of inner turmoil. Her work can verge on caricature, yet she is never condescending, never rushed. She can, however, be cruel, as in 1962's mustard-colored, freakish portrait of gallerist Ellie Poindexter—one of the sixty works, painted between 1930 and 1984, in this exhilarating touring exhibition of Neel's portraits (along with some cityscapes), curated by the Neel Estate's Jeremy Lewison and organized by the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. The show's title, "Painted Truths," presumably refers to each portrait's alleged psychologizing accuracy, but maybe the word *truths* implies something more stable than what Neel's work captures. For in expressing the brief, changing relationship between subject and painter, it is unable to arrive at any truth other than the inevitable, special distortion of vision born of the artist's profound emotional investment in each painting. Early canvases, from the Munchlike *Ninth Avenue El*, 1935, to the de Kooning-esque, brushy *Baron's Aunt*, 1959 often suggest outside influences. Perhaps partially owing to feminism and her wider recognition from the late 1960s, Neel's later portraits are characterized by a singular, highly idiosyncratic painterly form that, though hinted at in previous works, really flourishes here: outlined in blue and redolent of the spirit and fashions of the day, these portraits are colorfully stylized and mercilessly observant.

Neel rarely worked from photographs; she probed her subjects in conversation and painted them in her Manhattan apartment. Each sitter emerges as a complex, unresolved individual, taking a break from whatever important activity—raising children, fighting for communist principles, curating for the Museum of Modern Art in New York—makes them the interesting person we see. Often featuring enlarged eyes and

Alice Neel, *The De Vegh Twins*, 1975, oil on canvas, 38 x 32".

