

The New York Times

What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries Right Now

Nov. 25, 2021

Nolan Simon

Through Dec. 18. 47 Canal, 291 Grand Street, Manhattan; 646-415-7712, 47canal.us.



Nolan Simon's "Orgosolo," 2021, oil and dye sublimation on linen. Nolan Simon and 47 Canal

The pictures in Nolan Simon's fourth solo at 47 Canal start as photographs, both found and staged, that Simon weaves together in Photoshop. Printing them on canvas before going over them again with oil, he arrives at images that hover magically between photography and painting, with saturated colors, sticky looking finishes and surprisingly precise figures. They don't float you all the way into the untethered realm of the imagination, but they get your feet off the ground.

Scenes charged with mysterious subtext amplify this effect. Two men with extravagant beards lick a black preserved egg that looks like a sex toy; four hands milk a pair of goats into three glass goblets. Sometimes the paint serves to heighten a well-observed detail, like the silvery gleam of a stovetop coffee maker or the tension of those milking hands, and sometimes Simon just lets it get ornamental, as when the egg-lickers' beards descend into a cascade of squiggly gray lines. The vistas often look no deeper than a shallow bookshelf; two pieces even have trompe l'oeil wooden frames.

What's wonderful about all this is that it treats the ambiguity of the medium — visual imagery, you could call it now, rather than just photography or painting — as a technical capability rather than a philosophical conundrum. I'm not sure why the artist called his show "Polyamory," but for me it alludes both to the work's erotic charge and to this ambiguity. It suggests that something sexy is happening in more than one direction. *WILL HEINRICH*