

# Alan Reid — Poison Pen

Alan Reid's canvases are replete with lush intertextuality, stacking pictorial devices, ideological fragments, and slyly deranged missives stammering with the vestiges of a waning education class elevated into multifaceted enigma. Each painting signals sparkling with the refined syntaxes of a dandy interloping through the cultural economies of advanced capital, possessed of a gait and manner simultaneously Edwardian and futurist. Bruising nomenclature's contingency on context to decipher the differences between esoterica and absurdism, Reid's latest body of work is an eclectic reading list comprising Freudian slips, cognitive rhymes, and other unlikely juxtapositions in service to the associative or even the suggestive: amidst the plush frippery issue variously indirect yet potent indications of thick erotic subtext and the sadism of signification.

With delicacy and precision, Reid handles his medium's unwieldy past, marred with its various shady run-ins with image, muddled in the yawning mote around representation through which an anxious rush of longing, stressed veracities, partial truths, and tumultuous capacities for fantasy pass. Reid crossbreeds genre the way one might cultivate a new kind of rose, coaxing acute literacies from pulpy, subcultural references and effecting expansive readings from the most anecdotal of imbricated fragments. The paintings insinuate parts of their own bibliography, with Baudelaire and Paul Bowles invoked explicitly—and one might infer the likes of John Giorno, Broodthaers, Mallarmé, the Bloomsbury Group, Martine Aballéa, and Francesco Vezzoli as others in a boho intellectual rogues gallery just beyond this or that painting's trompe l'oeil fringed curtain.

And yet, as quasi-scholarly as these paintings appear, their content is as much concerned with style as with content. Fluttering among conventions of advertising, packaging, book covers, promotional signage, Warholian razzle dazzle, and fashion statements, Reid softly, cosmetically, blends painting's penchant for registering desire with a chicly disaffected approach to the epistemological wherein knowledge is coextensive with a certain panache of form. Offhanded decadence and dry wit in equal measure, Reid's montage paintings are productive speculations into modes of address, probing as much the 'how' and the 'why' of speech acts as the 'what'.

These are works that politely request curiosity—even sleuthing—from their audiences, all the while entangling their suave appearances in a complex underlying poetic system which privileges the paraphilia of the peripheral. Sidelong glances, armchair philosophies, flirtations, guesswork, wishes, seating assignments, ransom notes, effete malaises, and inside jokes are the comportment of Reid's visual paragons. These paintings and their texts and their surfaces and their implications treat quizzicality as timeless accessory par excellence.

— text by Matt Morris