

"The Manhattan Art Review"

Kritic's Korner

Key

***** Great

**** Good

*** Okay

** Bad

* Awful

Magnus Peterson Horner - Boy - [Jenny's](#) - *****

This is a series of portraits of a boy Magnus used to babysit, a simple idea deployed as a generative conceit. Unlike his Gandt show, there's little to no irony, which worked there and the lack of it works here. The art historical range of reference (Rembrandt, Titian, maybe symbolism or early impressionism, etc.) is both clear and sufficiently oblique to not smother the content, taking inspiration from rather than simply copying, and the treatment is consistently proficient across the range. The subject matter is similarly productive, boyhood as a broad context for images and situations that suggest the specificity of childhood memories without resorting to an explicit coming-of-age setting. The simplicity works in contradistinction to much of contemporary painting's crisis of subject, a perpetual worrying over what one can paint that doesn't feel like it's already been done. That anxiety, though, is self-perpetuating inasmuch that the crux of the struggle is the staleness of newness itself, the exhaustion of innovation. But the vitality of a good painting does not come from depicting something that hasn't been depicted before, it comes from the earnest interest of the artist in their relationship to their subject and the act of painting. Here, the artist was inspired to paint something not at all new, and in doing so captured something fresh in its uncomplicated disinterest towards being new.