

ALEXANDRE

Tessa Greene O'Brien Artist Statement

I want to know everything about it and I love that I never will. In a game that has almost no fixed rules, the limitations only appear when I bump up against myself, and that is the cliff that I return to. Painting is a dare, painting as a game.

The game at play in this current group of paintings involves two types of surfaces, oil grounds and dyed canvas. As I worked on the two surfaces simultaneously, distinct qualities emerged; With oil grounds, the bright white surface amplifies color and records every brushstroke. The paintings feel light and breezy, full of air and swirling marks. The dyed canvas paintings are more grounded: the color recedes instead of jumping forward, sinking into the absorbent surface, and they feel slightly more mysterious and dramatic. The challenge arose of how to connect these two techniques, to make the paintings buzz together like the right combination of guests at a dinner party, equal parts harmony and tension. To make it all sing, I began to interrupt them— bringing more airiness to the dyed pieces, and more gravitas to the grounds. It became a game to weave the paintings into a cohesive world of vernacular glimpses, weather, interiors, and intimate moments, heavy and light, linked together through visual clues and keys.

I paint what I see and what I know. Depicting the things, places, and people that I am intimately familiar with allows me great freedom, in the same way that people relax and become their most expansive selves amongst their inner circles. Observation grounds me in my surroundings, encouraging slow looking and delight in the mundane; this practice is the closest that I come to prayer. Joy and playfulness enter the paintings as I balance the faithful recording of details with an experimental approach to transcribing the atmosphere and emotionality of a moment.