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Cornelia Baltes

LIMONCELLO

340-344 Kingsland Road

January 15–February 20

Interrupting the view from the entrance of Cornelia Baltes's show is a large suspended canvas. On it, a bright blue fade and two U shapes are contained by a wobbling matte black background.

Initially, these forms register as a strange alien creature with closed eyes, but quickly they reconfigure into the rear of a pair of jeans.

The title: *Steve* (all works 2015–16). *Steve* turns out to be bum-to-bum with *Monika*, a set of raw canvas legs outlined in more black with horizontal bands of red and blue, suggesting sport socks or anklets. Nearby, *Fin* is set at an angle, just off the wall, while *Greg* leans back. The two hang little more than ten centimeters apart and are flirting like mad. *Cindy* wrings her fingers in the corner . . . Perhaps she likes *Greg*, too. *Hendrik's* loitering in the back of the gallery with *Twinkle*. *Untitled (Electrolytes)* consists of two inverted swoops of bright yellow set over a pure white surface, while *Feathers* has three gradating orange-to-white ovals straddling a naive-looking E routed into the MDF support. These two works are spaced between but away from the two main clusters of their anthropomorphic counterparts; ornaments in the backdrop of this hip gathering.

Baltes's titles are suggestive yet elusive, just like her imagery. Their mostly mono-word format aptly echoes the reductive and quirky qualities of her approach. Real-world observations inform but fall away from her stylized works. Though the artist's clean and unabashedly chic graphic sensibility suffuses this exhibition, the occasional scuff or rough drag of paint satisfyingly upsets the status quo of tidy lines, flat colors, and expertly graduated shades. Baltes's ability to imbue rigorously conceived form with playfulness and humor is impressive. And though her "cool kids" look decidedly "in," their visible, kooky neuroses manage to charm and utterly endear.



View of "Cornelia Baltes," 2016.

— Nicholas John Jones