

CALEB CONSIDINE

BY KAYLA GUTHRIE

ONE FEELS A SLIGHT uncertainty in looking at Caleb Considine's paintings: they almost always seem to strangely stop short of being fully realized, and not in an agreeably consistent way. Sometimes it looks as if the top layer of paint has been scraped off before it's dried; other times a body part will appear in fine cartoon realism, except rendered as oddly broken or interrupted, as in *Nots* (2011). The 31-inch-square oil on canvas, shown at Essex Street Gallery's booth at NADA Miami Beach last year, features a hand whose extended forefinger has been bloodlessly chopped off.

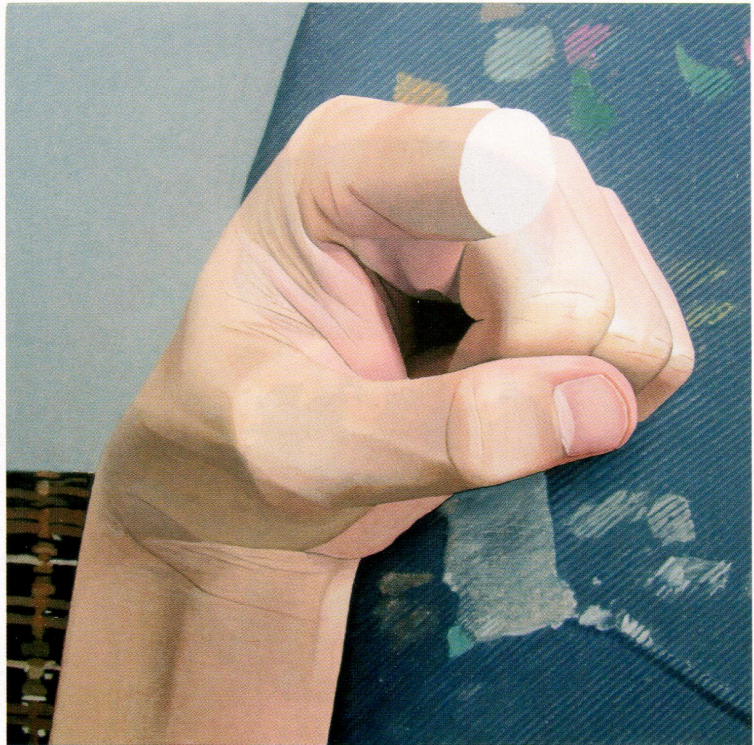
In the recent oils on canvas included in a March 2012 show at Vava Gallery in Milan, the artist's first solo exhibition, the degree of both finish and naturalism seems to fluctuate. Figure, ground and texture frequently trade places in a general atmosphere of sober unearthliness. Some of the works—like *Clubhouse* (2012), a still life of an empty pink toy house, bleakly glowing on a flat warm gray background—are brought to rich completion in hard-edged, oddly chalky detail, while other paintings are less forthcoming: one offers only a smear of brushstrokes occupying the top section of a pale gray surface.

Altogether, this coexistence of the observed and imagined invites comparison between the New York-based Considine—who was born in Los Angeles and obtained his BA from Yale in 2005 and MFA from Columbia in 2008—and earlier figurative paint-

KAYLA GUTHRIE is a musician, artist and writer living in New York. See Contributors page.

COMING SOON

A solo show at Essex Street Gallery, New York, opening in January.



Caleb Considine: *Nots*, 2011, oil on canvas, 31 inches square. Courtesy Essex Street Gallery, New York.

ers. His clean, bright light and coolly domestic atmospheres recall Fairfield Porter's indoor portraiture, although by contrast Considine's paintings have an unnatural sterility, as if painted under a UV lamp or halogen daylight bulb. And the interiority they depict is marked by a medicated calm: a numb feeling that could be the result of various states of checked-out-ness, via psychological disorders, prescribed or recreational drugs, or too much Internet or TV. Indeed, Considine repeatedly portrays young women frozen behind laptops, their spirits seemingly evacuated from their bodies.

Considine's figures, both naturalistic and dreamy, could be compared to the characters in the animated

films of Richard Linklater—*Waking Life* (2001) and *A Scanner Darkly* (2006)—which use a technique called rotoscoping. In these films, the morphing, unreliable bodies of lucidly dreaming or designer-drugged characters wander within a gently pulsing, hand-rendered space. In a sense, this better evokes today's flowing subjectivities than does traditional cinematography. Considine's paintings hint at a similar vision of the world, one in which events, objects and people flutter like cards across a flat existential plane, rather than falling into orderly sequence and perspectival space. Subtle, ordinary reality—a sensory environment as pliable as our wills permit—can be more slippery than we think. ○