

# rachel uffner

## THEGUIDE.ART

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“Warmly” is an apt title for an exhibition of work that invites gentle entrances. Hilary Pecis’s paintings are scenes of pleasant living: Los Angeles bungalows packed with books, still lifes and house cats. Breezy terraces brimming with exotic plants and boho-chic furniture. Landscapes of the American West dotted with signage for swap meets and thrift stores and farmers’ markets.

Each painting is dense with particular symbolism. Among the volumes in *Clementine’s Bookshelf* (2021) are no fewer than two copies of the biannual journal *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* and MFA syllabi mainstays like *Artificial Hells*, *Whitewalling* and *I Love Dick*. David Foster Wallace shares a shelf with Virginia Woolf, and a modest library on African art is scattered pell-mell among the collected works of Ovid, Dante and Shakespeare. Elsewhere, Pecis paints crossword puzzles and cacti and ivy in small-batch ceramic planters. Paintings of paintings are peppered throughout, including works by Paul Cézanne, Gabriele Münter and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner.

Such scenes of erudite domesticity are less about the atelier’s mystique (as in, say, Édouard Manet) than the fully realized depiction of a bourgeois interiority. In paintings like *L’Atelier Rouge* (1911), Henri Matisse, whom Pecis cites in several works, collapsed the bounds of the artist’s private practice while revealing ostensibly mundane objects to be, in fact, talismans and totems. Pecis shares in this belief that intellectual pedigree demands external manifestation. In her work—as in the work of David Hockney, Jonas Wood, Derrick Adams and Hulda Guzmán—the perfectly curated and coiffed private home becomes an homage to specific artistic and scholastic traditions.

Pecis’s works in “Warmly” are much larger—and in much higher demand—than her earlier, more manageably sized paintings. At one point, her paintings might have argued for a democratization of personal edification, but as their scale and ambitions have grown, it’s become somewhat more difficult to imagine them in regular city apartments. Pecis’s art remains marvelously conversant with its surroundings, but perhaps this shift in register signals the final enshrinement of such cozy environments before they enter different kinds of collections—public and private. —*Will Fenstermaker*

Rachel Uffner Gallery  
170 Suffolk Street  
New York, NY 10002

+1 212 274 0064  
info@racheluffnergallery.com  
racheluffnergallery.com