

HESSE FLATOW



Aglaé Bassens, *Idling*, 2025, Oil on canvas, 51 1/8 x 66 7/8 inches (130 x 170 cm). Courtesy of the Artist and HESSE FLATOW New York. Photo: Jenny Gorman.

Aglaé Bassens: *VACANT*

November 14 – December 20, 2025

HESSE FLATOW is pleased to present *VACANT*, a solo exhibition of new paintings by New York-based artist Aglaé Bassens. Marking her fourth solo exhibition with the gallery, *VACANT* continues Bassens' long-standing interest in the emotional charge of ordinary moments and objects, while introducing a significant shift in both her source material and painterly approach.

Rooted in the still life tradition, Bassens embraces the genre's inherent contradiction—its hopeless attempt to fix life, to hold time still. Yet, as she points out, life does not stay still. From this paradox stem themes of impermanence, memory, and mortality. The paintings in *VACANT* depict sparse, actorless scenes: a deflating balloon, a table set for no one, the interior of an empty car. These are sets from which the subjects have just departed—or perhaps never arrived. By making emptiness the subject, Bassens invites us to consider how meaning often resides not in the narrative, but in the space left behind.

Unlike earlier works that relied on a mix of found and personal digital images, the paintings in *VACANT* are all derived from Polaroid photographs taken by the artist herself. This is a material and conceptual shift in Bassens' practice. Each Polaroid captures a moment of presence, a rare pause in the blur of daily life. The soft, milky hues and chemical unpredictability of instant film tie the series together through the color and abstracted quality of the image. The flash often obliterates detail, leaving behind voids of information—gaps that mirror the emotional and narrative ambiguity within the paintings. This lack of specificity allows the viewer to enter the work with their own projections and memories, transforming each image into a mirror of subjective experience.

Bassens' painting process echoes the slow emergence of the Polaroid image. Using thin washes of oil paint, she allows the white of the canvas to remain visible, letting each composition materialize gradually. One is first struck by the surface—its quiet, unforced gesture—before the image reveals itself over time, like a memory returning with soft edges and missing details.

Throughout *VACANT*, Bassens contemplates the indifference of time to personal milestones and private meanings. Her quiet scenes reject the grand narrative in favor of the fleeting and the mundane. In doing so, they assert the beauty—and the poignancy—of what is most often overlooked. The works ask us to be still, to observe, and to find significance in small things. A shift in light. A pause before movement. A moment that passed without announcement.

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As Bassens reflects, "Contemplating mortality can be unsettling, yet there is poetic beauty to the indifference of time to our milestones, achievements and losses. It helps us find resilience in the commonality of human experience. These are the paradoxes that interest me: that nothing matters and therefore anything matters, that time is both fast and slow, and the seeming impossibility to be present for all of it."

Aglaé Bassens (b. 1986, Belgium) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. Bassens has a BA in Fine Art from the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art, Oxford University (2007) and an MFA in Fine Art Painting from the Slade School of Fine Art, London (2011). Her work has been exhibited internationally, with solo presentations at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami; HESSE FLATOW, New York, NY; 12.26, Dallas, TX; Nars Foundation, Brooklyn, NY; CRUSH Curatorial, New York, NY; and Cabin Gallery, London; as well as group exhibitions at Gowen Contemporary, Geneva; STEMS Gallery, Paris; The Valley, Taos, NM; and Workplace Gallery, London. Her work is featured in *New American Paintings No. 134 Northeast Issue* and in *100 Painters of Tomorrow* published by Thames and Hudson. Bassens's works can be found in the permanent collections of the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami and Colección SOLO, Madrid, Spain.

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HESSE FLATOW is a gallery and curatorial platform founded by artist Karen Hesse Flatow in 2019. It had its start as "Crush Curatorial", where many artists we work with today had their debut solo show. Hesse Flatow has an MBA and an MFA from Columbia University and attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. The program focuses on emerging and mid-career artists with diverse voices, presenting debut solo shows and focused presentations. We are located in an accessible ground floor space in Tribeca, New York City.