

The New York Times

'Beauty Can Be the Opposite of a Number'

Through March 8. Bureau, 178 Norfolk Street, Manhattan; 212-227-2783, bureau-inc.com.



From left, Martin Wong's "Man Carries Unborn Twin Inside His Head 21 Years," 1982; Libby Rothfeld's "Felix's Community (#5)," 2020; Rene Daniels's "Kades-Kaden," 1987; Ms. Rothfeld's "Who Am I? Who Am I! (#2)," 2020. Rene Daniels/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; via Pictoright Amsterdam; Dario Lasagni

A row of green and orange structures stand in the middle of the Dutch painter Rene Daniels's oil "Kades-Kaden." They're buildings, but they've been simplified enough to pass for books, too. Floating above them, written on a pale blue sky, is "de Zon" ("the sun").

Not everything in "[Beauty Can Be the Opposite of a Number](#)" at Bureau Gallery, a beguiling group show curated by the gallery owner, Gabrielle Giattino, has writing in it. There are two luscious animal photos by Peter Hujar, a video by Uri Aran and Quintessa Matranga's painting "Black Butter Champagne," which shows three alcoholic drinks, each doubled as if by drunkenness, against an upturned table. But Libby Rothfeld surrounds the numerals 2 and 5 with industrial-beige tile in a pair of sculptures, Rochelle Feinstein's painting "Wrong Wrong" features comic-strip style word balloons, and a wonderful painting by Martin Wong spells out its title as trompe-l'oeil chalk drawings of hands signing in A.S.L.: "Man Carries Unborn Twin Inside His Head 21 Years." By encoding this phrase in a form that viewers can't easily read, Mr. Wong reveals the evocative musical beauty it can have as an abstract pattern. But you still want to know what it means, and in a looser way, that's the effect of the show as a whole. It feels like an important message which, once you've seen it, won't let go till you've gotten to the bottom of it.

WILL HEINRICH