

Dan Attoe

PERES PROJECTS BERLIN

Schlesische Strasse 26

May 2–June 21

Even without the viciously funny yet sometimes poignant captions and descriptive phrases that Dan Attoe pencils inside, alongside, and on the reverse of his oil paintings, his art has the emotional subtlety and narrative complexity of a haunting short story. On the canvases' slick surfaces, which the artist coats with fifteen applications of gesso before sanding them to impeccable smoothness, his images appear to romanticize obnoxious nihilism, cheap misogyny, and sloppy misanthropy. The seven paintings and six neon sculptures in "Complicated Animals," his second solo exhibition in Berlin, include scenes of a murdered blond on a motel bed, death-metal devotees, a threesome in a drab office, and burly bikers bonding around a bonfire. But unlike the legions of bearded hipsters in trucker hats who fetishize the feral aesthetic of America's alienated rural youth, Attoe addresses his subjects with genuine empathy, existential inquiry, integrity, and an awareness of moral ambiguity.

Attoe was raised in a rough, small Pacific Northwest town, was fascinated by punk rock and postmodern theory, and studied creative writing while completing an MFA at the University of Iowa. The slivers of text incorporated in each work can bite; they can upend the moral foundations and sympathies of their readers with a single telling observation. One line, written like a caption over the head of a woman near the man primed to penetrate an upside-down girl spreading her legs on his desk, speaks for Attoe's art in general: THIS WILL BE OVER SOON, BUT WHAT YOU GET FROM IT IS YOURS TO KEEP.

—Ana Finel Honigman



Office in the Afternoon, 2008, oil on canvas on panel, 24 x 36".