

## Jake Cruzen

YOUNG ART

5658 Hollywood Blvd

September 26–October 31

Jake Cruzen's oil paint is so thin it looks like watercolor. For his first solo exhibition, Cruzen smears, blots, and dabs the figure of the same woman into six paintings each titled *Bridget Blonde* followed by a number. In *Bridget Blonde No. 1* (all works 2015), the title character looks over her shoulder, her jacket threatening to fall. In *No. 3*, Bridget crosses her arms and smirks, exposing a tit. In *No. 6*, Bridget looks nowhere in particular, so we look at her tattoos. Around each picture, gesso fades from a pearlescent white to a filthy gray, hiding old shapes and lines—would-be thighs or sides. The off-white ground often works its way into the figure, absorbing an entire knee, or acting as an ingredient in the pink and tan gradients of her skin.

At best, Cruzen supplants the male gaze's familiar pathologies with his technique—too painterly, too weird. At worst, his subject is yet another female muse to use and see through. But the materiality of the paint, the chosen palate of piss and puke, and the occasional stuck-on hair add a Brechtian emphasis on the images as images. Crusting paint makes a rose bedspread. A bird on a shoulder is both a tattoo and a confidant. Like a seedy contemporary departure from Gustav Klimt's Symbolism, the artist's works make a compelling appeal for an unironic turn toward so-called Sunday painting. Both suggesting and refusing glamour, his works may aim for the aesthetics of Hollywood Boulevard rather than the austerity of the gallery, but they do it with an earnest, awkward grace.



Jake Cruzen, *Bridget Blonde No. 6*, 2015, oil on canvas, 60 x 48".

— Tracy Jeanne Rosenthal