

# THE NEW CRITERION

## JULY 7, 2021

### THE CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK: ANDREW CRANSTON

by Andrew L. Shea



Andrew Cranston, *Waiting for the Bell*, 2021, Rabbit skin glue and pigment on bleached canvas, Karma, New York City.

“Andrew Cranston: Waiting for the Bell,” at Karma (through August 6): I first encountered Andrew Cranston’s paintings at the 2019 iteration of Frieze New York, where his luminous, quiet, Nabi-influenced paintings on the backs of hardcover books were a welcome respite from the general cacophony of the contemporary “scene” packed in under one tent. Now we have a chance to see Cranston on his own at Karma in Alphabet City, through August 6. There the Scottish painter is exhibiting much larger works of distemper and oil on canvas, in addition to a selection of the small book paintings. The use of distemper (a fragile, glue-based paint that runs matte and chalky) called to my mind Vuillard’s use of the medium, but Cranston’s efforts are a bit stranger—less naturalistic in color and more idiosyncratic in composition. Figures populate these delicate washes of interior or landscape light, but what they’re doing isn’t usually clear. In one almost humorous, magenta-drenched scene, a group of soccer players hikes up a sandy dune in the distance, while a reclining idler plays his pipe in the bottom right corner.