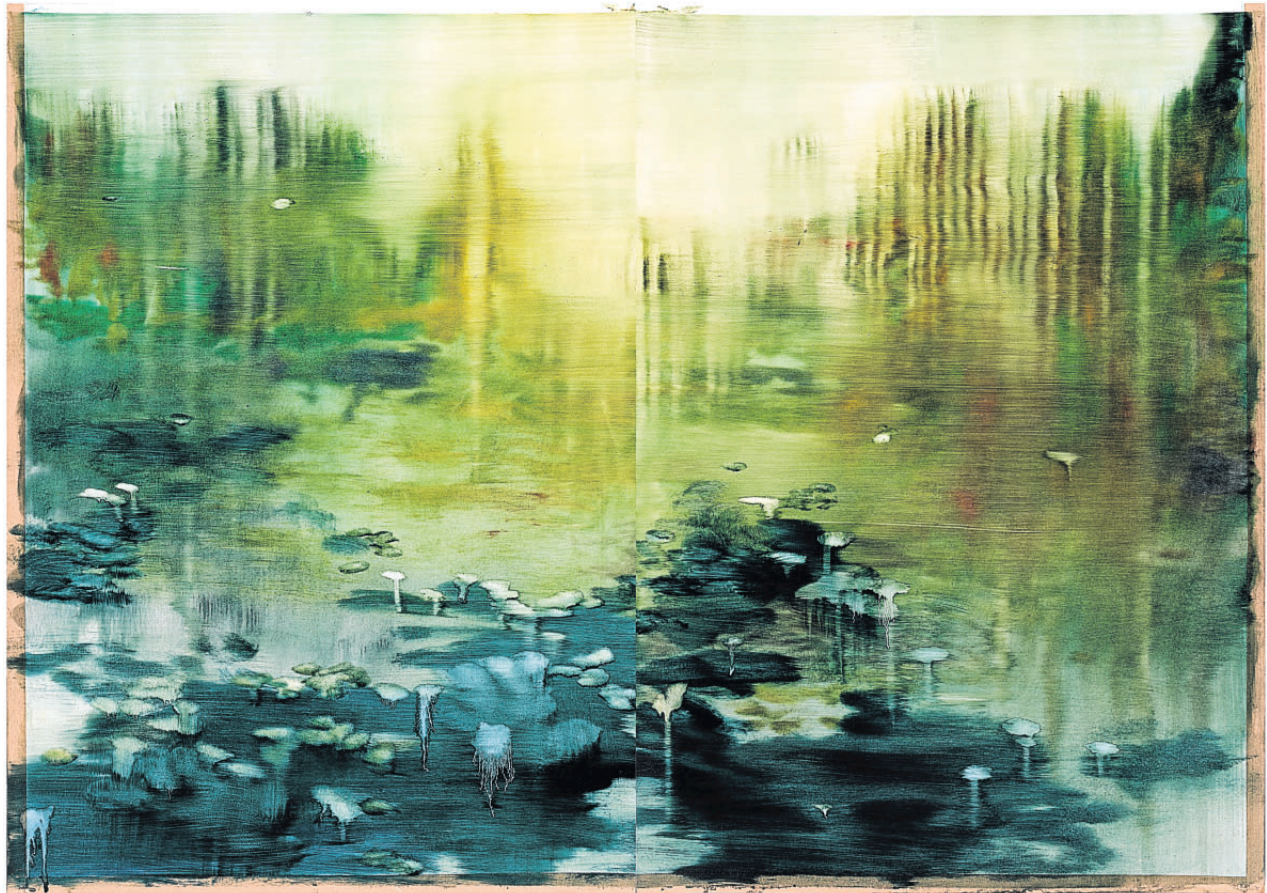


WORDS BY
Isabella KuijersPICTURE
Supplied

8-MINUTEREAD



AN Arcade (dyptich), oil on canvas

AN IMPRESSION OF MEMORY BROUGHT TO LIGHT

The third solo exhibition by Alexia Vogel recreates moments as intense and vague as reverie itself

Federico Fellini's 1973 film *Amarcord* begins and ends with a feather-light cascade of puffballs – round, confetti-like poplar seeds borne on a wind that announces springtime. This cotton hailstorm drifts through *Lost in Reverie*, settles on the fields of *Along the Way* and throngs the largest works in *Light Leak*, the third solo exhibition by Alexia Vogel, recently on show at Barnard Gallery.

Amarcord is Romagnolo (an Italian dialect) for “I remember” that carries a connotation of sentimental reminiscence. The film and Vogel's work recreate personally important moments, bringing with them the nostalgia, emotional intensity and vagueness of memory.

Vogel has an interest in the relationship between photography as source imagery and what painting can do to enrich or change that imagery. Indeed, memories feel so much like live photos; a flurry of movement and then a final frame sticks in the mind. Her title, *Light Leak*, refers to an accidental aperture that lets in “stray light”, corrupting the photosensitive medium and often producing an overexposed area.

The showers of dots in the series *Light Leak*, as well as in *Arcade* and *Scatter*, mimic the Bokeh effect. The vertical blurring, in the series *Sanctum* and *Facet*, references by-products of moving the camera during the photographic process. Through the melding of photography and painting Vogel walks a tightrope between figuration and abstraction that expresses the imperfect recall of memory.

In this case Vogel draws those memories from her 2018 artist's residency in Saint-Émilion, France. In particular she works from photographs of the collegiate church of Saint Émilion, an impressive edifice carved from a single block of stone. Its medieval spire and limestone arches house a moody interior awash with the gloaming tones of stained-glass windows. Inside this sanctum the frenetic static of the dots gives way to a quiet atmosphere of religiosity. The change from the bloom of oscillating molecules to a

silent cloister is striking.

Vogel's palette has matured in this show as she's begun to incorporate the girlish pastels of previous shows into an altogether darker universe. Distorted and dramatic shafts of light carve through saturated shadows. The paint imparts a gloomy, wet quality that echoes throughout the show.

Light Composites I through *IV* are grids of studies of the church and its surrounds. Their size and white borders bring to mind Polaroid photographs. Each is unified by the use of certain colours. For example, in *Light Composite IV*, cadmium yellow and adulterated emerald green dominate the 11 small paintings.

Vogel is indebted to the legacy of the Impressionists, especially Monet, in the manner in which she creates her shorthand for light. Similarly, Vogel's work brings to mind contemporary Japanese artist, Naofumi Maruyama. She is a proponent of a current trend in landscape painting in which nebulous forms suggest a mood rather than the specifics of a place.

Light Leak continues in the emotionally soaked vein of Vogel's previous exhibitions in which fragile memories begin to warp and deform with painterly handling. The mental light leak that flares across her paintings ensures that feeling is the predominant subject matter. **15**