

Andrea K. Scott, "Spotlight: Serena Stevens," The New Yorker, July 23, 2020 <https://www.newyorker.com/goings-on-about-town/art/spotlight-serena-stevens>



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ART

Spotlight: Serena Stevens



Courtesy Postmasters Gallery and the artist

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As galleries cautiously start to reopen, the most socially distanced show of the summer may be the promising début of **Serena Stevens** at two vanguard spaces: Postmasters, in lower Manhattan (through Sept. 12), and the National Exemplar, in Iowa City (through July 30). The young realist painter—who recently returned to her native Iowa after chasing the light in California, New Mexico, and Rhode Island—is at her best in scenes of domestic interiors, watchfully rendered rooms that convey the contradictions of home and the tension between melancholy and intimacy (as seen in “Rocking Chair,” above). The spaces are lived-in but unoccupied, except for the occasional cat. In the spectral cream-and-blue “Sit on It,” it takes a moment to register that one pet lounging on an overstuffed chair is really a pillow—imagine a LOLcat envisioned by Vilhelm Hammershøi, the Danish bard of empty interiors. Stevens works at a roughly one-to-one scale, a lifelike proportion that lends her big, voluptuously painted pictures both an immediacy and an air of *déjà vu*.

— *Andrea K. Scott*