

The more you look, the more there is to see

By Cate McQuaid
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Like many painters, Israeli artist Guy Yanai uses his own photographs as source material, but his focus, in a show at LaMontagne Gallery,

is less the subject of the photo than how camera and computer — and, in turn, paintbrush and the “screen” of the canvas — shape the way we see.

The paintings appear simple, but they're freighted with subtle complexities. Yanai's subject matter is often dull: the corner of a canopy at a gas station, a detail of a swing set that doesn't include the swing. But he paints with sunny, delectable colors. His technique looks painstaking; he renders mostly everything in straight horizontal lines. Yet it's also cursory; he applies one layer of paint, and he's done. The almost-mechanical nature of Yanai's process inevitably emphasizes the imperfection of the artist's hand, and that, too, creates tension.

The more time you spend with his work, the more there is to see. “Aqua Di Parma/ Void” depicts a door beneath a yellow awning. Yanai's straight-line painting system lays bare the elements of composition, so representation veers sweetly toward abstraction. Wedges of sunlight and shadow break the wall surrounding the door into shades of gray. The jaunty awning looks built out of angles and blocks of yellow.

“Grass” depicts a woman's leg and sneaker-shod foot dropping down vertically over a flat passage of green and a stripe of bubblegum pink. Shadows here are solid forms in several shades — a dark arc to the side of the leg houses a triangle of light.

Yanai points out how photographs and video are framed, how a painting is constructed, and how they coalesce into pictures. He often uses his straight lines like pixels, as when he paints the reflection of a sailboat in “Pink Sky at Night.” These days, pictures come at us constantly, and this artist, with his banal subjects, seems to lament the throwaway nature of visual



BLAD SARIG (TOP)

From top: “Grass” by Guy Yanai, Emily Speed's June carapace performance, and here it translates ordinary scenes into something arresting.

culture. Yet paint can be indelible, and here it translates ordinary scenes into something arresting.

Taking shelter

Back in the 1860s, a massive boulder in the yard outside Jane

Deering Gallery (which is also Jane Deering's house) in Gloucester had a little pavilion atop. People could climb up a set of stairs and sit up there, taking in the view of the seashore.

Emily Speed, a Liverpool-based installation and perfor-

GUY YANAI:
Lived & Laughed & Loved & Left
At: LaMontagne Gallery,
555 East Second St., South
Boston, through Aug. 28.
617-464-4640,
www.lamontagnegallery.com

EMILY SPEED:
The Boulder Project
At: Jane Deering Gallery,
18 Arlington St., Gloucester,
through July 20.
978-281-8051,
www.janedeeingallery.com

KRISTIN TEXEIRA:
Memory Lane
CAITLIN DUENNEBIER:
Journey to Candied Mountain
At: Lincoln Arts Project,
289 Moody St., Waltham,
through Aug. 3.
781-214-1087,
www.lincolnartsproject.com

mance artist who explores the psychological complexities of shelter, has created a site-specific work inspired by that boulder. She staged a performance in June. The remnants of the performance remain, specifically a carapace Speed constructed for herself out of cardboard trash she collected on walks around the village of Annisquam. The costume looks like a village, with little buildings jutting up all over it.

Wearing that cardboard shell, she mounted the boulder. Deering says audience members were not aware that she was inside, although her arm was hanging out, like the Wicked Witch of the East's feet poking from beneath Dorothy's house, just landed in Oz. People took the carapace for a sculpture. Now, the costume lies as the centerpiece of the installation in the shed beside the boulder, like a skin some critter has left behind.

It's an odd thing, part structure, part clothing, and part community, pitting security against impermanence. It must

have looked particularly fragile up on the boulder, like any human habitation vulnerable to the elements. Speed further explores the illusion of safety buildings give us in elegant watercolor drawings that combine imagined buildings with rocks, and in text projected on the wall, such as “architecture is a hazardous mixture of omnipotence and impotence.” We may never truly be safe, but we construct things, ideas, and beliefs to convince ourselves we are. And sometimes these, too, can fell us.

A grabby grid

Kristin Teixeira is a memoirist, which might seem odd for an abstract painter, but she sometimes scrawls juicy details in pencil alongside her paintings in her show at Lincoln Arts Project. In “All of the Boys I've Ever Kissed,” she re-creates the emotional tenor of each guy in shades and smears of pink. One kid, Mark, who kissed the artist when she was 12, is depicted as a long, rounded pink slab. Turns out he kissed “with tongue,” and the artist “nearly choked every time.” Others are less literal, but equally evocative.

“MassArt Memory Lane” is a grabby grid installation of dozens of simple postcard-size paintings, most with a sandwich of three colors, each depicting someone Teixeira knew in art school. From a writing perspective, she could be more pointed with her details, but the color juxtapositions hum and bop on the wall.

Downstairs, Caitlin Duennebieer's strong, simple, surreal narrative paintings focus on a cast of oddball characters. They accompany a story about a dangerous mountain made of candy. “We Named the Sugar Horse Tiffany” shows three shirtless, gray-skinned men in black hats and fedoras, two on the back of a white horse. Those two, and their mount, all primly close their eyes as the other fellow fumes. Duennebieer's cartoonish paintings commingle threat and sly humor to great effect.

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