



BEDTIME STORY by Matt Brackett was bought last month for \$4,500.

The Story of *Bedtime Story*

One painting, from idea to canvas to wall. + **BY CATE McQUAID**

APRIL 2004 + Sean Halloran, a psychologist and painter in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, comes upon an image of Matt Brackett's work in issue 38 of *New American Paintings*. "He sent [Brackett] an e-mail," says Renee Halloran, Sean's wife. "He felt compelled to tell him how much he loved his work."

MAY 2004 + The couple and two friends drive for six hours to Massachusetts to attend Somerville Open Studios. The Hallorans have never bought original art before. They meet Brackett and purchase his *One More Time*, a 22-inch by 34-inch painting depicting a man carrying a rocker on his back down a twisting stairwell, for \$1,995.

MARCH 2005 + Brackett lands his first solo gallery show, to be held at Alpha Gallery in Boston. Since his grandmother's death in 2001, he has been painting scenes set in her house in Duxbury. "They're all based in or around that family house and peopled by friends and family members or myself," Brackett says.

Bedtime Story, a 29-inch by 45-inch oil painting on canvas, is set in his grandmother's bedroom (below). "The painting references stories, or family stories, between sisters," Brackett says. "My family has a number of sisters in different generations."



It goes through several stages. First Brackett does improvisational sketching to develop an idea for the image. Then two friends serve as models for a photograph: Reading in bed, the pair's interactions give the painter more ideas. In all, Brackett spends 11 months on this painting and others for the exhibit.

JANUARY 2006 + Brackett sends out a postcard inviting friends and fans, including the Hallorans, to his show. The couple look at the new paintings posted on the gallery's website. On January 31, Renee remembers: "Sean called, and he said, 'Did you go to the website? They put up 10 more paintings. I think we should go to the opening.' I said, 'OK. We'll take the kids out of school and go.'"

FEBRUARY 2006 + On February 3, the Hallorans pack up their four small children and drive to Boston to see Brackett's new work. "Sean had flagged three paintings," says Renee, "but when we got there, we both developed an emotional attachment to *Bedtime Story*." On the spot, they purchase it for \$4,500 but can't bring the painting home until the exhibit closes. The Hallorans plan to hang it in their second-floor hallway. "All the bedrooms are upstairs," Renee explains. Now that they have two of his paintings, she says, "we're Matt Brackett collectors."