

REGIONAL REVIEWS

Massachusetts

Alpha Gallery/Boston, MA

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MATT BRACKETT: NEW PAINTINGS



Matt Brackett, *State of Grace*, oil on canvas, 38 x 60".

Nothing is quite what it seems in Matt Brackett's first solo show at Alpha Gallery. The paintings depict time-honored subjects—landscape, seascape, interiors, and genre—but what appears to be straightforward is, in fact, the exact opposite.

Most of the paintings seem to show significant episodes in the artist's life, epiphanies into experience at a deeper level. Some even suggest allegory, such as *Casting Off*, which shows a group of teenagers trying to move what appears to be a boulder.

All of these paintings, though realistic or in some cases surrealistic, are really about the handling of space and light. Brackett decidedly updates and moves the tradition of American landscape painting into the twenty-first century. Beneath the beautifully painted surfaces enigmas and questions abound. In almost all the works ambiguity is as much a part of the scene as is the furniture or the landscape.

Many of the scenes take place in his family's vacation house in Duxbury. With an upcoming sale of the house Brackett has had to confront his past, his feelings of loss, and his memories. There is also an ironic quality to some of these scenes: a man withdrawing water in plastic bottles from a boundless source; young people trying to move a very solid-looking structure; a man holding an anchor while peering out of the window to presumed water.

Technically the paintings are superb: Brackett received his BFA from Yale University and is also the son of a talented painter, Prilla Brackett. His painting of the light in trees, in an attic, or on waves is amazing. *State of Grace* shows a young woman emptying sand from her shoe on a beach, and the visual of the sun setting over the water is breathtaking. Even indoors in *At Home*, the attic light and depiction of space are handled masterfully. *Alicia Faxon*