

reviews: new york

Pepón Osorio

Ronald Feldman

Exuberantly detailed, meticulously researched, and cobbled together from countless elements, Pepón Osorio's socially engaged installation *Drowned in a Glass of Water* (2010) rotates on an enormous creaking turntable. With its title referring to a saying about life's overwhelming problems, the piece is wondrous, unsettling, and replete with the ambiguities of life and art. All kinds of sculpture—assembled, found and altered—and painting, as well as tantalizing video double takes,

echo and reinforce an unspoken narrative of loss, pain, and vulnerability. The installation is based on two real families with absent fathers: one from blue-collar North Adams, Massachusetts, the other from nearby, collegiate Williamstown. Water is the dominant metaphor. Transparency is in the very process of this work. A collaboration with the families as well as students and faculty at Williams College, the installation was originally made and assembled in a North Adams Chevy dealer's showroom during the summer of 2010, in full view of the local public. Then it went to the Williams College Museum of Art.

Osorio's concern for the travails of real life is reflected in the installation's structure. As it revolves, the cluttered interior of one home morphs into the manicured exterior of the other, linking architecture, landscape, psychology, anthropology, sociology, and ornament through parallel but opposite details. A woman in a crimson wedding cake-style gown (crocheted by 23 people) in the chaotic living room could be a Velázquez infanta, but her arms are plastered with Band-Aids and toy police cars circle the empty wheelchair near her. As the piece turns, viewers gradually absorb the up-ended furniture, pills, Hummel figurines, a boy in a helmet who merges with the

TV, and a girl collapsed on a sofa. When the interior inexorably shifts to the obverse exterior, with its manicured lawn, pool, hospital gurney, and mysterious golden heart under glass, the work is no less unsettling. The parlor wall has reversed to a mirrored divider that implicates everyone.



Pepón Osorio, *Drowned in a Glass of Water*, 2010, mixed-media installation. Ronald Feldman.

Purifier (2010), an additional watery piece in this exhibition of four works, provided another reversal. It consists

simply of a glass of water mounted up near the ceiling and a text explaining that placing a glass of water at the highest point in a room is supposed to protect the space and clear the air. The back gallery was transformed with the clapboard wall and iron gates of a narrative video installation. Osorio also orchestrated a performance piece on the sidewalk the day the exhibition opened: a staged arrest that took place at designated times.

—Kim Levin

Adam Straus

Nohra Haime

Sometimes it's the modest gesture that produces the most mesmerizing results. Such was Adam Straus's achievement

with this series, "Taking Notes or Trying to Keep the Fiddle Tuned." The compact oil-on-paper works here were as luminous as Hudson River School paintings.

Born in Miami and living now on Long Island's East End, Straus depicts scenes from both locales. He has a particular knack for depicting light at varying times of day and under different weather conditions, as could be seen in *Bridge in Fog* (2007), with its glowing streetlights, and in *Moonrise Over Meeting House Creek* (2007), where a singular orb is reflected in a shallow marsh. In images such as *Fire & Water* (2008), with its candle imposed on a serene seascape, and a picture of the sky titled simply *Air: Clouds and Sun* (2010), the light produces mystical overtones. What was impressive throughout was how much the artist conveys in such a modest scale.

Straus's paintings are also deeply personal, almost diaristic. *Noah Looking at Something Outside of the Picture* (2010) depicts the artist's son dressed in a red sweatshirt and jeans, looking through binoculars while standing in a vast field of tall grass under a cloud-strewn blue sky. Like his father, Noah is an observer, lost in the beauty of what we suppose is



Adam Straus, *Noah Looking at Something Outside of the Picture*, 2010, oil on paper, 11" x 15". Nohra Haime.

before him. We almost sensed what he could see based on the other paintings on view—of beaches, country roads, palm trees, and rain storms. He might be anticipating the view in *Sunset—Pixelated* (2011), featuring an orange glow over a dark-blue sea, broken into bits as if digitally created but also reminiscent of a seascape by Monet.

—Barbara Pollack