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Time Out New York / Issue 615 : July 11, 2007 - July 18, 2007

Reviews

Dawit L. Petros and Bryan Jackson

Alexander Gray Associates, through Sept 8 (see Chelsea).

In the first room of this double debut, Dawit L. Petros obliquely evokes his own experience as an Eritrean emigrant to Canada. A photograph found on the Internet of two black climbers flanking a wooden "welcome" sign in the snows of Mount Kilimanjaro, for example, is juxtaposed with two larger photos by the artist himself: One shows a wordless replica of the sign erected on the frozen tundra near Churchill, Manitoba. The other features a dark-skinned hand holding out a mountain-shaped pile of salt over a California salt flat. A horizon line shared by all three pictures continues on an adjacent wall as a division between areas painted blue and white, which miraculously become an expansive, abstract landscape. A video synthesizes the artist's winter train trip to Churchill, along Hudson Bay, subtly interweaving nature, displacement and whiteness—both literal and metaphorical.



Dawit L. Petros, *Proposition 1: Mountain*
Photo: Courtesy Alexander Gray Associates, New York

In the next gallery, Bryan Jackson casts two Bratz dolls in *Softly*, a shorthand gay love story in the form of a music video. Accompanied by an electronica soundtrack, the video features a meet-cute via instant-messaging and a shower scene. Jackson films his vapid, big-eyed actors in pitch-perfect sets, including the doll-sized bedroom (exhibited in the gallery), outfitted with a miniature Eames chair, an orange messenger bag on the carpeted floor, and a bookshelf

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with tiny volumes on Derek Jarman. At the end of the video, the camera pulls back to reveal a klieg light and one of the dolls in a director's chair, suggesting a metafiction that is both preposterously campy and strangely affecting.

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