

# Art in America

February 2000

## REVIEW OF EXHIBITIONS

### David FeBland at Fraser

David FeBland's new work reflects in no small way his background as a commercial illustrator; this is not necessarily a negative. A fleeing red train leans steeply in *Above and Below*, distorted to convey speed in the old comic-book mode—whoosh! The big city under the el train is a riotous tangle of people racing around after other people, and of people felled by blows. FeBland does a kind of Ashcan School at a raw hip-hop pace.

Real or implied violence is everywhere in these pictures: parking lots, shopping malls and, of course, the streets are presented as sites of alienation and danger. Typically, FeBland's paintings depict a sense of baroque and confusing movement—a boy pushes a shopping cart at full sprint in the distance, a man hurriedly packs groceries, others enter and leave. *West Side Romance*, 1999, shows a tall and attractive, mini-skirted and jacketed businesswoman, talking on a cell phone, walking swiftly. She pointedly turns away to avoid looking at a street person struggling with a laundry cart overflowing with stuff. A businessman on the right looks at his wristwatch.

It is his critique of urban America through his subject matter that carries the work. Those wary, nervous, scurrying participants, raging and fearing in the tumultuous city, empower the paintings. Take the weird *Play the Game*, 1999, set in a parking lot: several men and a woman jog with awkward intensity, exercising their fancy show dogs. The effect is gratuitous and surreal—unforgettable.

—Joe Shannon

David FeBland: *Play the Game*, 1999, oil on linen, 20 by 48 inches; at Fraser.



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