

# COVER MAGAZINE

## GOTHAM CITY COUNTERPOINTS

DAVID FeBLAND AT CAELUM GALLERY  
by Rachel Youens

In David FeBland's "City Stories," the inaugural exhibit currently at Caelum Gallery's new Chelsea space, there is both raucous action and the distance of urban hush. Often employing a fish-eye perspective, and utilizing an array of sources, FeBland creates the excitement, the clash and the danger of the world just outside our door. His larger paintings carve out action scenes between outlaws striding toward their next move and bit players who traverse this grand melting pot — submerged in the anonymity lent by the street. We however are experiencing a New York as remembered as it is contemporary in the muted greys, purples, ochres, and thickly impastoed surfaces of FeBland's palette. With its immigrants, thrill seekers and those defined by the confines of their existence, FeBland, like Malcolm Morley, is interested in the shoreline, street corner, or subway station — the Gotham City as a place where initiate and outsider collide and sometimes exchange places.

When the artist takes up this surge of extras, making them the subject as in "Queens Arabesque," they gather a strong group identity that speaks more directly to the daily camaraderie of exile in a new land.

Here, immigrant mothers wearing the local dress of their native country parade down the street with their strollers as though on a march for mothers' rights.

"Hear No Evil," on the other hand, was inspired by FeBland's commute to his studio down the West Side Highway between warehouses and piers. This painting comes closest to a fairy tale, which the stable horse notices and the groom to his detriment denies. A couple of not-so-young outlaws in lumbering jackets fly through the air amidst the winding sightlines of the city in "Cuffed Thug With Aircraft Carrier." FeBland's fish-eye view wants to take the whole spectrum of height and depth in a Breugel-like scenario: his monumental outlaws attempt escape past the happy know nothing tourists and menacing silhouette of a World War II aircraft carrier.

Many of these paintings define struggle as linked to taking the next step. They also share both an element of the epic struggle of masculinity in George Bellows' boxers or moments of intimacy among those with less as in John Sloan's paintings. FeBland takes the idea of melting pot in the guise of multiculturalism and pits the differences of visual counterpoint as they reorganize the clash of action amidst a cluster of intentional and unintentional relationships.