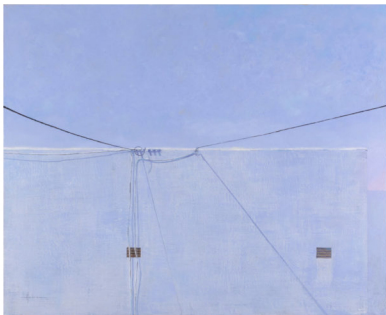




Pick of the Week



Alex Roulette; Eric Hesse

Two painters posit banal architectural environments as metaphoric expressions of thoughts and emotions at **George Billis Gallery**. Each of the eight oil paintings comprising **Alex Roulette's** show, "Memory Moving Sideways," features one or more people dwarfed by uninspiring suburban environs of concrete, dirt, grass and water. These contemplative easel-sized scenes initially appear mundane, but bizarre mysteries emerge upon closer investigation. Impressions of normalcy succumb to striking incongruities, such as incurious bathers wading towards a shallowly submerged sedan in *Under the Surface* (all works 2018). Engulfed in stultifying milieus of tightly controlled nature, Roulette's tiny protagonists consistently appear lonely and ineffectual. Pointedly symbolizing disunity and isolation, *Divides* shows a tiptoed man peering over a wall, trying vainly to catch a glimpse of the ocean beyond. Desolation also pervades **Eric Hesse's** encaustic cityscapes.

Contemporary encaustic is typically associated with mixed-media collages and/or abstractions; but pigment suspended in molten beeswax can render a spectrum of atmospheric color, light, matter and air. From brick walls jutting with scabrous maroon impasto to azure skies luminous with translucent waxen layers, Hesse's show, "Almost Not There," tenders a rare skilful display of the ancient medium's wide-ranging representational potential. Beleaguered industrial structures and other mundane trappings of urban life serve as foundations for Hesse's transcendent geometric compositions such as *An Emptiness I Needed to Know* (pictured above), where the whitish side of a nondescript edifice blends into sky divided by tenuous wire. Both painters portray nature and factitiousness as inextricably linked.

George Billis Gallery LA

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Shows run through Nov. 24