

Street Magazine
Miami
October 2002

Math Time (excerpt)
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Boy's Life

One block down, at Leonard Tachmes Gallery's dangerously titled *Is This It?*, Christian Curiel's four paintings brim with sexuality, loneliness, joy and the private rituals of the psychologically disturbed, awing much to '80s bad boy painter Eric Fischl.

In *Stimulus*, frail-looking boys frolic, a la the work of Miami artist Hernan Bas, in a kiddie pool surrounded by a sea of grass. In the slyly titled *Between The Vernal Equinox and the Summer Solstice*, a shirtless boy, finding himself alone, hugs a rough-barked tree in a forest scene right out of Boticelli's *The Allegory of Spring*, as if lost in a fantasy or euphoria induced by beauty and renewal. A scary-looking boy, in *Food for the Gods*, holds a bird in his mouth like a faithful retriever and looks straight into the viewers' eyes. In *You Can Have Your Cake*, a mischievous boy in sneakers peeks under a surprised quinceañera's dress.

But as in earlier canvases, what grabs your attention most in Curiel's paintings is his intense interest in patterns, colors, drips and dollops. His figures are sometimes painted as if he's in a hurry to get to the patterns. Half of *Food for the Gods* is covered in a green blanket set off by silhouetted flowers and flower buds like pink buttons. The quinceañera's dress in *You Can Have Your Cake* is a luminous white; the background a tunnel of blue. Grass for *Stimulus'* frolicking boys is made up of thousands of thin strokes in shades of green and black. The exposed sides of the paintings are also telling. They are covered in luscious paint spills and drips. Curiel may be an abstract painter trapped in a figurative painter's brush.

It's not clear how Jason Ferguson's work fits in with Curiel's. His piece, a stylized, computerized, 12-foot-long picture of mountains in the artist's native Trinidad, casts an interesting shadow below it, but the piece itself still manages to be staid.

Hanging somewhat awkwardly in the gallery's office, Tall Rickards' series of photographs *In After the Noon* are nevertheless well-composed and offer some instances of poetic beauty,

The series, based on that Robert Duvall three-hankie flick *Tender Mercies* of all movies, features a self-absorbed cowboy, lost in his own testosterone-aded cinematic drama as he walks lonely roads in moody afternoon and quiet midnight. He is forever awaited by a Cindy Shermanesque sucker-girl fretting in bed, photographed Cindy Sherman style.