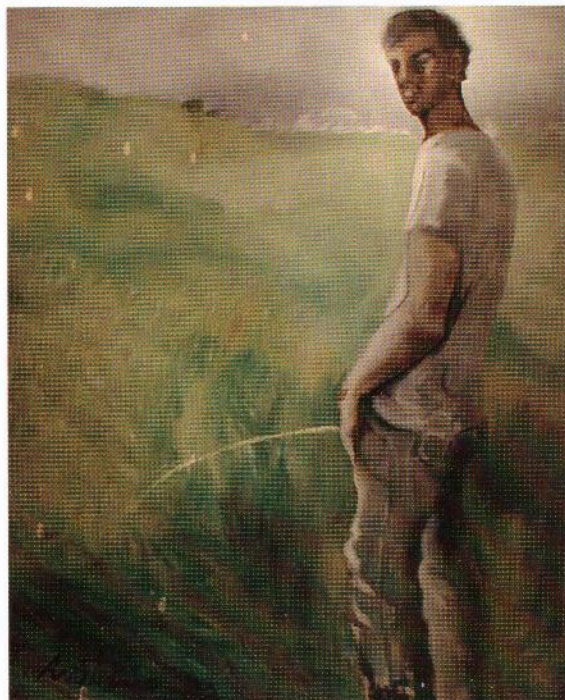


are not lovers. The course of the show, however, reveals in almost episodic fashion a tumultuous and emotional relationship between the two that is ultimately passionate and romantic. For example, two large paintings in the front room, *Christopher John in White Fard* (2001), a tall vertical canvas (84 by 40 inches), and the 2003 double panel *The Wall He Built Around Himself* (76 by 49½ inches), feature close-up portrait heads that convey psychological insight. Violent gashes scarring the surface of each canvas were made by the model, who burst into the artist's New York studio one night and, in a fit of rage, slashed all the images of himself he could find. Instead of discarding the paintings, Stevenson found the slashes engaging. Indeed, the "wounded" pictures evoke a certain raw intensity.

Early last year, the artist and model patched up their friendship and Stevenson embarked on a new series of idealized portraits titled "Christopher John Reborn," which filled the rear gallery. Outstanding among them, *Christopher John Reborn #1* is a close-up of the model holding a small seashell resembling a conch. Painted in pastel hues, with a wispy, almost Redon-esque delicacy, the composition is highlighted by several similar shells floating in mid-air near John's head and hands. *Christopher John Reborn:*

Harold Stevenson: *Christopher John Reborn: Montauk Landscape*, 2004, oil on canvas, 96 by 72 inches; at Mitchell Algu.



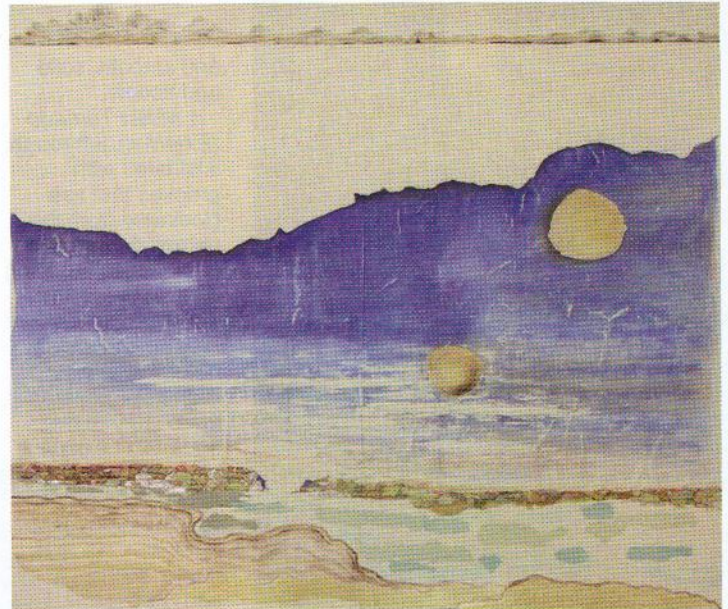
*Montauk Landscape* shows the fully clothed model standing to one side. A bright yellow stream of urine arcs from his body across the brilliant grassy meadow. Far from a smutty provocation, the painting is unexpectedly lyrical. Besides what could be a witty reference to Warhol's "piss paintings," the work communicates yet another facet of Stevenson's unabashed love for both his model and for the act of painting itself.

—David Ebony

### Theresa Hackett at Florence Lynch

In a pluralist art world we can no longer count on being periodically embraced by a zeitgeist, but instead find ourselves buffeted by squalls of mini-zeitgeists, each with its own claim to representing a shift in general sensibility and a stylistic unification of formerly disparate traditions. Theresa Hackett's breezily intricate paintings on paper mounted on linen are emblematic of a fluidly diagrammatic style that has been in play for a while now, one that brings together the graphic memory of Japanese woodblock landscapes, the Symbolist landscapes of the Blue Rider group, the more recent eccentric Outsider-meets-Paul Klee mannerisms of Fritz Hundertwasser, and the culture of cartography.

Hackett's fabrication process is accumulative and loosely improvisatory, rather than reductive and end-driven. It's the pictorial equivalent of the accumulative installation esthetic that dominates contemporary sculpture. What stamps Hackett's sensibility as her own is her long-standing engagement with ocean and sky as associative pictorial orientations in even her most abstract work. Their specific elementalism is felt in Hackett's preference and deep feeling for blue and white as her principal color divisions. She is from



Theresa Hackett: *Closer Than You Think*, 2004, mixed mediums on paper on linen, 84 by 106 inches; at Florence Lynch.

California and a surfer. Blue and white for her are more than esthetic wish fulfillment; they are her basic experiential orientation to the world.

The constructed physicality of Hackett's paintings is part of their immediate allure. They are sizable, with three works in this show extending to nearly 9 feet in either height or width, and the other three spanning over 5 feet in their longest dimension. Strips of felt in white and light earth colors are cut to the thickness of the stretcher bars and placed so that they run and pile up along the tops of the paintings, resembling the shifting strata of clouds caught in time-lapse photography. Hackett also slices up maps and pieces them into mound-shaped forms, comparably stratified, that rise up from the bottom of the paintings. The blue and white of water and sky rest on a smoothly layered topography of paper sections covered with a heavy acrylic medium and gesso sanded to a softer-edged surface. And, of course, the base paper sheet is itself a kind of layer placed atop linen, creating a juxtaposition that is structural, luxurious and—when one recalls Klee's and de Kooning's paintings on paper and unstretched fabric mounted in turn on board or stretched canvas—a sort of historical homage. The built-up strata speak of slow, even geological time, while the darting chromatic lines with which she limns her mound forms, and the pools of blue paint that describe either water or a nocturnal air,

are signifiers of freer motion and a certain evanescence.

Hackett has always played with layers and notational drawing, just as her palette has always featured a certain color program. What has evolved most compellingly is the balance and elegance in her composition and drawing, a kind of masterful remove that's as cool as her palette. Given the open, "hot" nature of her technique and material range, the formal cool of her compositional and material integration completes the work as never before.

—Stephen Westfall

### Hunt Slonem at Marlborough Chelsea

Quiet, luminous fields of painted gold underlie the regimented visual cacophony of the world according to Hunt Slonem. For the most part dated 2004, these new paintings, characteristically, are densely figured with representations of the much-publicized tropical birds that populate his labyrinthine studios. They are also obsessively complicated with butterflies, flowers and the emblematic faces of saints that resemble their models more in spirit than in fact. Both decorative and devotional by intent, these prominent figurative elements are ranked by color, size and kind against the golden ground; the surface is then inscribed with a furiously cross-hatched mesh of lines drawn with brush handles, cutting through the rich oil to give an impression of layers of wire