



Jane Dickson:
Xmas—2 Car Garage, 2006-08,
oil on Astroturf,
40 by 56 inches;
at Marlborough
Chelsea.

city. The road ahead curves, or recedes with deadpan perspective straight into deep space. In front of you are red taillights and pale, approaching headlights; the road often appears wet and reflective. Acrid browns, blues, greens and many modulations of blacks and grays are the foundation for an unexpected and affecting beauty. Both atmospheric and geometrically structured, the paintings depict tunnels, bridges, gas stations and highways that could be scenes from an anxiety-tinged narrative, outtakes from a film noir.

The inhabitants of Dickson's earlier Times Square paintings are gone. Although she portrays no people here, the viewer's own watchful attendance is implicit and integral to the psychology of these images. They call up the downbeat mood of an Edward Hopper, not to mention the roster of Precisionists who considered the industrial landscape. These references are tempered, even contradicted, by Dickson's chosen surface, Astroturf. As a stand-in for canvas, this low-end industrial product (invented in 1964 by employees of the now-controversial Monsanto Corporation) offends conventional proprieties and challenges the painterly illusion of penetrable space. It intensifies the reality not only of the physical surface but also of the abrasive urban cultural milieu that has been Dickson's subject for two decades.

The new paintings sometimes achieve an iconic character through symmetrical, frontal compositions. For example, *Blue Bridge—GW 2* (2008) is an homage to the George Washington

Bridge, at approximately 5½ by 3 feet. An arched, ornate tower, resplendently illuminated, occupies most of the surface. In *Xmas—2 Car Garage* (2006-08), colored lights bordering decorated, lavender garage doors communicate with the stars in a suburban epiphany. The radiating light in *Blue Tunnel 2* (2006-08) is both a convincing evocation of moving at 60 miles per hour and a hallucinatory flash.

Working on variously colored Astroturf (green, blue, brown) and gradually building a precise light and mood, Dickson captures a lonely aspect of our historical moment. Although the paintings represent glimpses of the road, the dates for many of them span several years, suggesting that they emerge from an extended process of contemplation and fine-tuning.

—Robert Berling

JANE DICKSON MARLBOROUGH CHELSEA

Jane Dickson's recent paintings present nocturnal and late-afternoon moments as seen from a vehicle driven by you, traveling viewer, as you move through transitional spaces on the margins of a