

ROBERTS & TILTON

Tema Celeste
"Faris McReynolds"
Shana Nys Dambrot
September/October 2004
Pg. 93

faris mcreynolds

Roberts & Tilton
Los Angeles

An idiosyncratic cinematic sensibility pervades the new series of watercolors and small-scale, mixed-media paintings in Faris McReynolds's exhibition *It's a Rainy Day, Sunshine Girl*. Nature itself becomes a protagonist rather than merely a backdrop in these works. Here, McReynolds reduces the natural world to the Symbolist lexicon of autumn; dead leaves on trees and on the ground reveal a pervasive psychological subtext of conceptual counterpoints—decay/beauty, danger/comfort, personal/archetypal. These are not exactly dualities, more like twisted metaphorical pairings that accomplish exactly what establishing shots do in movies: they set the tone for the imminently unfolding narrative. But, in McReynolds's case, they also fulfill a double role as narrative itself. In works such as *Untitled (house)* McReynolds employs an array of painting techniques within a single image, the better to effectively relate the story on several levels at once. A reserved Fauvist chromatic sense is used in portraying the accumulation of florid autumn leaves on a house's roof; an impressionist impasto gives this mass a preternatural weightiness, thus registering the drama of physical threat. The wide brushstrokes, made with immediacy and drama, are individually discernible, yet are in no way antagonistic toward the cohesion of the image as a whole. The rest of the house has a smooth, luminous quality that one finds in Edward Hopper paintings; the walls are constructed of a sort of lonely, warm and seamless surface that tips the balance further toward allegory than representation. The partly cloudy sky is as Romantic and finely rendered as a Maxfield Parrish, registering a benevolent presence and sustaining the work's overall dynamic of psychological depth and complexity. McReynolds has developed through a medium and scale change from his previous oversize works on canvas without relinquishing any of the natural storyteller instincts that make him a strong voice for a return to allegorical figuration.

Shana Nys Dambrot



Faris McReynolds *Untitled (house)*, 2004, oil and ink on canvas / olio e inchiostro su tela, 75,2 x 91,4 cm.