

Art Reviews

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Upwardly Mobile: Works of art appear on the walls of tract houses and trailer homes far less often than these middle- and lower-middle-class subjects appear in contemporary paintings. That's because art doesn't trickle down from the top of the economic pyramid, running dry as it disperses across the lowest levels. On the contrary, it gets sucked upward, feeding the appetites of collectors who can't find its peculiar pleasures anywhere else.

Upward mobility (and its downwardly spiraling opposite) take stark shape in the five paintings in Liam Jones' solo debut. At Post Gallery, the young artist's acrylics on panel depict the American dream of home ownership as something both flimsy and intractable, an illusion that has less to do with the real world than with the fantasies that fuel our attachment to it.

A sense of dislocation permeates all of Jones' images. In one, a monstrous stone fountain in the foreground dwarfs four houses in the background. The raw wood of their frames, still under construction, looks naked and vulnerable, incapable of living up to the pomp and

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ceremony of the preposterous fountain.

In another nearly symmetrical image, three trailer homes form an unceremonious courtyard in which a cluster of cypresses has been transplanted. The whites, grays and beiges of the trailers' metal skins reflect the midday sun, which flattens everything except the deep-green trees and their black shadows. The airless painting is claustrophobic and suffocating.

Jones' pictures disturb because their fastidiously rendered details make them less rather than more realistic. It's as if the labor that goes into their production works at cross-purposes with the illusions they're meant to live up to.

Every blade of grass, cypress branch, cinder-block and plywood sheet has been so fussed over that the urban landscapes they form have the presence of still lifes. They're artificial setups over which someone else has godlike control.

In the end, Jones' paintings are not about the dream of simply owning a home but the desire to own a home that's bigger and better than whatever you have. Built-in, the nightmare does not disappear at sunrise.

• *Post Gallery*, 1904 E. 7th Place, (213) 622-8580, through Feb. 24. Closed Sunday-Tuesday.