

## GAGOSIAN GALLERY

Art in America  
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often embellishes with the work's title in a block-letter caption below the image. In *North America Divided* (2001-02, approximately 26 by 28 inches), the initials N above A are stenciled in gray. The frame ensconces a small, delicately wrought scene of a rock wall spanning the middle of a grassy field, with a felled tree and a broken wood beam at the center suggesting a violent act of human and/or natural origin. Thematically, the painting typifies Jenney's longtime focus on environmental concerns. Newer developments in the paintings on view unfold slowly, more in terms of refinements in technique and format than dramatic breakthroughs.

The Connecticut-born artist, whose roots lie in installation art and post-Minimal abstraction, came to prominence in the mid 1970s with the emergence of what curator Marcia Tucker would baptize "Bad Painting." His faux-naïve studies of people and objects were prescient of the Neo-Expressionist movement and instrumental in reestablishing figurative painting as a serious art form. Inspired by the 19th-century Hudson River School, Jenney eventually arrived at his own form of visionary landscape, using intricate brushwork and high-key tones to convey rarified spaces and a dense atmosphere. Two of the exhibition's highlights were from his long-running "Atmosphere" series. Painted with more than a dash of humor, *Atmospheric Formation* (2005) is a luscious skyscape that hints at a

fable, as wispy white and purple clouds in the shapes of tortoises and hares float across the dazzling blue expanse.

The most recent paintings conjure global warming. They feature a glowing tropical forest, based on Florida vegetation, as if seen through the slats of window blinds. In the radiant *North American Vegetae #4* (2007-08, about 24 by 68 inches), for instance, the composition of palm fronds and vines is extremely compressed as the unadorned black wood framing the narrow composition is proportionally larger than in most earlier pieces. Where once Jenney's frames recalled those preferred by Dutch old masters, they now appear as ominous encasements, as if a forest fragment were kept alive inside a hermetically sealed container, into which viewers are afforded barely a glimpse.

—David Ebony

### NEIL JENNEY BARBARA MATHES

In this, his first New York solo in a decade, Neil Jenney presented 17 major oil-on-wood paintings from the past 12 years. The brilliant land- and skyscapes on view, mostly long and narrow horizontals, are all encased within the artist's trademark heavy black wood frames, which he designs and

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Neil Jenney: *North American Vegetae #4*, 2007-08, oil on wood with frame, 24 by 68½ inches; at Barbara Mathes.