

December 11-17, 2008

## Bill Jacobson

### “Some Planes”

★★★★★

Julie Saul Gallery, through December 24

Known for blurry figures and street scenes, photographer Bill Jacobson continues his investigations into the limits of vision and also turns the page in his new show. In seven vertical photos, he depicts deserts in the American West in sharp focus; these vistas, each titled *Some Planes* and bifurcated by the horizon, seem oddly liminal and insubstantial, bleached out as if by the harsh sun. The artist's manipulations of one image—low, eroded gray buttes recede to pale lilac in Arizona's Painted Desert—flattens out the scene, but leaves it quietly expansive, like the place itself.

In another picture, near Great Salt Lake in Utah, earth and heaven meet as nearly uninflected rectangles of tan and blue-gray. The effect is almost hallucinatory, like a mirage or the vision of one of those hermit saints who meditated in the wilderness—or a pastel Rothko. A photo of the gentle curve of a black dune silhouetted at dusk against a blank sky at White Sands National Monument in New Mexico suggests Ellsworth Kelly.

In “A Series of Human Decisions”—six small, square images in the gallery's foyer—man-made juxtapositions echo the demarcations of planes in the landscapes: canvases stacked in a painter's studio; the glowing white shade of a lamp in a dark mahogany interior. A painting photographed on a bare wall features a sketchy, unfinished portrait that uncannily recalls Jacobson's own early work. The artist's change of focus (pun intended) imbues these unpopulated scenes with the careful consideration he gives his animate subjects.

— Joseph R. Wolin



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