

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Johanna Fateman, "Critics Pick: Maureen Gallace," *Artforum*, June 9, 2017.

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Maureen Gallace

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555 W 21st Street

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With each new show of small gorgeous landscapes by Maureen Gallace, it's natural to look for what is different from last time, noting incremental shifts in technique or subject matter. (For example, there are more paintings of the sea in this group.) But the more important point seems to be that, after more than two decades, her paintings remain very much the same. In her vistas of usually rural New England, bluntly elegant, or maybe confidently awkward, brushstrokes make up sand, snow, flowers, foliage, and sky. Often, there's a house, shack, or barn at the picture's dead center, and often she reduces its structure to bare geometry. In the striking red, white, and blue *Ice Storm, Easton (with Robert)*, 2015, two brick-red buildings are rendered as blocks without windows or doors. Their roofs are crisp white trapezoids broken up by mushy lines (sticklike winter trees and their shadows).

Gallace's filtering of detail doesn't follow an Impressionist's logic of light and distance; it's a product of her own compelling algorithm. Western art history is internalized, surfacing in a mysterious but coherent haze rather than as a collision of references. But she does exploit a collision of some kind. The uncanny effect of simultaneous naïveté and knowing in her small oils (*Ice Storm* is among the biggest in the show, at ten by thirteen inches) derives from the merging of incongruous qualities: the sincerity of the regional landscape genre or the plein-air hobbyist, the speed and sophistication of her wet-on-wet brushwork, and the studious aura of conceptualism around a more recent tradition—painting from photographs. While many artists devote a lifetime to the potentially breathtaking project of minor variation within sharp constraints, the enduring, unpinpointable coolness of Gallace's work always makes one wonder if there is not an element of durational performance in her persistence.



Maureen Gallace, *Beach Shack, Door, August 14th, 2015*, oil on panel, 9 x 12".

— Johanna Fateman