

# GLADSTONE GALLERY

Martha Schwendener, "Art Show: Maureen Gallace," *Elle Decor*, June 8, 2010

## ELLE DECOR

### ART SHOW: MAUREEN GALLACE

*This painter draws upon memories of her New England childhood for landscapes both serene and haunting*



Photo: Courtesy of 303 Gallery, New York

Imagine Emily Dickinson working as a 21st-century visual artist, and you get a sense of what Maureen Gallace's paintings are like. Her canvases of houses and landscapes in her native Connecticut are small, usually no larger than nine by 12 inches. But they seize your attention, commanding white walls in galleries or, recently, at the Whitney Museum of American Art, where her work was featured in its 2010 Biennial.

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Gallace lives in Greenwich Village and teaches painting at New York University. But the homebody ethos in her work is undeniable. "The house is a very primal place," she explains. "As children, it is often the first thing we draw." The pitched roofs and white-shingled structures in her paintings suggest an austere New England aesthetic, although Gallace points out that it's not the stereotypical patrician one. "I'm a total product of Ellis Island," she says. "Connecticut just happens to be where I grew up."

Some viewers find Gallace's paintings reassuring. For others, they update Nathaniel Hawthorne's spooky New England Gothic. Francesco Bonami, a curator of this year's Biennial, sees "a tension that exists in American culture between the vastness of the landscape and the obsessive need of the individual to inhabit a private, almost claustrophobic environment where one can hide from society."

Gallace observes that her work moves from personal to public and back again. "I'll tell my brother that I made a painting of Crosshill Road, and he'll say, 'Which part?' And then visitors from Australia have said, 'That looks exactly like where I grew up.'" Gallace subtracts details and expressive touches from her landscapes, and viewers project their histories—what their own homes and families were like—onto the missing parts. "The house doesn't mean anything per se," she says. "It's an empty vessel."