



“THE VIEW THAT STARTLED GREIG,” 2011, **Jeffrey Beauchamp**
 OIL ON CANVAS, 25" X 40"
 PHOTO: COURTESY THE MCLOUGHLIN GALLERY

SAN FRANCISCO

Jeffrey Beauchamp: **“She Misplaced My Hurricane Blueprints”** **at The McLoughlin Gallery**

Years ago, talented young painters were warned by wise, old teachers against “facility,” against making handsome paintings without struggle; we who lack the handicap of virtuosity should cast a sympathetic eye, therefore, on the beguiling, beautiful oils of Jeffrey Beauchamp. A skilled realist, he became dissatisfied some years ago with the “blandscapes” he was doing and loosened up his style with what he has described as “busting out” brushwork and a “caveman dance” process, of making gestures guided by intuition and improvisation, in the abstract expressionist style. His turbulent landscapes all but fly apart through sheer bravura, but somehow remain legible and coherent, due, no doubt, to his apprenticeship in realism in the late 1980s, when nothing could have seemed more *démodé*.

It was a self-guided study, of course. Beauchamp ensconced himself in the school library, studying Turner, Monet and Lorrain, emerging only to explore northern California’s “amazing garden,” hiking and painting with a friend. His work thus derives from both tradition and nature, and oscillates between realism and abstraction, but in an odd way: the

modes are not fused, as in Cézanne or the Bay Area Figurative painters, nor are they confined to separate bodies of work, as in Gerhard Richter (whose soft-focus realism Beauchamp explored for a period). Rather, they are presented simultaneously in parallel, in the same paintings, as double images. As we change focus from depth to flatness and back, the hazy, golden-hued landscapes dissolve into energetic calligraphy, and vice versa, with each aspect canceling and superseding the other, like the complementary but incompatible partners in optical illusions: duck and rabbit or goblet and profile. Despite their humorous, absurd, enigmatic titles (some bearing excruciating puns), Beauchamp’s small landscapes like *If You Give Me Bach That Handel I Can Finish Making the Schubert (Classical Landscape)* (2010), *The View That Startled Grieg* (2011), *Hideout of the Daisy Chain Gang* (2011) and *In the Missing Manor* (2012) reward serious, sustained looking. Other collage-like works that juxtapose unrelated nudes, cartoon figures, friends and family members, though sumptuously painted, are literal and literary by comparison.

—DEWITT CHENG