

ARTFORUM

CRITIC'S PICK



Emma Webster, *Forest Vigil*, 2018, oil on canvas, 108 x 84"

modeled tableaux in paint. These Frankensteinian idylls, with their filmic set design, betray the underlying truth of all landscape painting: Every image of nature is a product of human handiwork. The history of art is a history of artifice, of painters rendering landscapes from their points of view and thereby shaping them, tainting them. Representations of nature are always already spoiled.

Yet the postlapsarian world of Webster's pastoral dreamscapes somehow retains an Edenic sublimity through its foregrounded artificiality—these locales, while uncannily familiar, are like no place on earth, each so perfect a model of a model of some heavenly dwellings.

LOS ANGELES

Emma Webster

DIANE ROSENSTEIN

831 North Highland Avenue

February 9–March 23

Sir Philip Sidney describes his Arcadia as “so perfect a model of the heavenly dwellings.” For “Arcadia,” her first solo exhibition, Emma Webster showcases painted landscapes of a similarly mythic *locus amoenus*. These canvases feature 2-D oil renderings of 3-D dioramas that she cobbles together in her studio. The maquettes juxtapose surreal bucolic scenery with clay animal figurines, plastic foliage, and art-historical iconography evoking everything from work by Albert Bierstadt to Francis Bacon, Hieronymus Bosch to John Martin, and Western film backdrops to elementary school arts and crafts.

Although the exhibited works are not collages themselves, that patchwork sensibility remains even after Webster has translated the imagery of her

-Tyler Malone