

JASON MIDDLEBROOK  
Time Out New York  
June 26 - July 3, 2003



## Reviews



Jason Middlebrook, *The Beginning of the End*, 2003.

### Nature Boy

Elizabeth Dee Gallery, through Jul 31 (see Chelsea).

Despite its title, this summer group show is surprisingly free of bare-assed boys behaving badly. Instead, gallery artist Doug Wada has curated an intriguing collection of landscape paintings (plus a few sculptures) by a bunch of guys who are mostly known for anything but nature studies.

Jason Middlebrook steals the spotlight with *The Beginning of the End*, turning Robert Indiana's *LOVE* monument into a Stone Age lawn ornament, complete with fake flora sprouting from its crevices. Nature versus artifice is also a theme in Peter Rostovsky's *Puddle*, a painted pseudo-reflection of towering redwoods reaching toward the night sky, installed on the gallery floor like a small pool of water, and in Lawrence Seward's fantasy snails scaling the gallery's walls. Alexis Rockman's paintings are perhaps a little too predictable in this show, which features so many artists for whom the natural world is new territory.

For instance, Sean Landers, who is usually identified by tirade-filled canvases, instead offers up *Reunited... (Summer)*, a picture of two apes loping toward each other at dusk, which is filled with a muted pathos worthy of the Hudson River School. Peter Krashes soars with an image of a swirling vortex called *Flight School* that evokes a view of land from the cockpit of a plane spinning out of control. Alex Ross (whose paintings of photographs of clay figurines are rarely associated with natural wonders) presents a lumpen form of a tree trunk, or perhaps it just looks like one, given the context. In this and many of the other selections, Wada suggests that artists, like everyone else, take summer vacations. But in this case, it is flights of imagination, not car trips or airplane jaunts, that free them from the daily grind.—Barbara Pollack