

ARTS & LETTERS

GALLERY-GOING

by THOMAS M. DISCH

Also at the Alexandre Gallery is a single painting by Brett Bigbee, which the gallery offers as a pledge against an as-yet-unspecified full-scale Bigbee exhibit. Mr. Bigbee paints slowly, and his figures are often on a larger-than-life scale with tight resolution. "Joe and James" (2002-03), the 5-by-4-foot oil now on view, shows two boys, ages (I'd guess) 3 and 9, standing before a painted ocean. But they themselves are as trompe l'oeil as two boys can be, and are determined to stare down the onlooker, who may feel a bit embarrassed to find himself in their nearly naked presence.

In earlier oils Mr. Bigbee has painted other naked boys (and women) and even a self-portrait in boxer shorts, holding his son, and his figures always have their eyes fixed on the viewer in a steely stare. I can imagine there are states where Mr. Bigbee's big babies could get

him taken in for questioning, especially if they were images on his computer rather than gigantic paintings hanging in the studio of a certified painter.

It is an irony of cultural history that these beautiful children, who would be right at home next to Donatellos or Bellinis, nowadays bear with them a whiff of transgression. But if they do, it's only because we have learned not to see the putti and amoretti on the ceilings of so many cathedrals for what they are — the messengers of Eros.

"Lois Dodd: Nudes in the Landscape" at the New York Studio School until January 17 (8 W. 8th Street, between Fifth Avenue and Washington Square West, 212-673-6466). Prices: \$6,500-2,800.

"Lois Dodd: Small Paintings" at the Alexandre Gallery until January 17 (41 E. 57th Street, between Park and Madison Avenues, 212-755-2828). Prices: \$6,500-\$8,500.

"Brett Bigbee: Joe and James (2002-03)" at the Alexandre Gallery until January 17 (41 E. 57th Street, between Park and Madison Avenues, 212-755-2828).



Brett Bigbee, 'Joe and James' (2002-02).

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