



Currently Hanging



MARIO NAVES

LeBoeuf's Seductive Power—Eerie, Familial Paintings

The good thing about the notoriety and success of John Currin, predicts a painter friend, is that it'll spark a renewed interest among younger artists in the Old Masters and traditional art-making skills—like drawing from the figure. That's better than the umpteenth variation on Mona-with-a-mustache, I guess—*how* much better, only time will tell. There are indications that Mr. Currin's old-school affectations are taking hold. Would a painter like Bryan LeBoeuf find a welcoming home in Chelsea otherwise?

Mr. LeBoeuf, whose recent canvases are on display at the Miller/Geisler Gallery, has clearly had a solid academic schooling. His knowledge of the human form, agility at manipulating oils and eye for the checks and balances of composition will draw "oohs" and "aahs" from New Yorkers resigned to the notion that they don't make painters like they used to. Mr. LeBoeuf's pictures of sons and fathers, brothers and sisters, women bathing and men sleeping are narrative fragments imbued with a strong sense of place. (They are, in fact, set in Louisiana, the artist's birthplace.)

Scratch immediately below the mundane surface of Mr. LeBoeuf's paintings and you'll find a spooky and,

at times, unseemly realm of sexual intrigue, familial discontent, identities in crisis and—if I'm reading accurately—alien invasion (for the canvas imbued with the acidic green light). This isn't

tal canvas depicting a woman in her bath, is the exception. Mr. LeBoeuf's subtle modulation of white and gray in depicting the porcelain tub and surrounding tile merits accolades, as does the slow, almost aching ascension of the woman's right knee out of the bathwater. The picture's seductive power can be traced to an unease that's evoked rather than underlined—a sense of time forever stilled. *Vessel* brings to mind the uncanny quietude of Chardin and the skewed and pithy scenarios of Catherine Murphy, two sterling painters Mr. LeBoeuf might want to get to know and take inspiration from. Left to his own devices, he might not outgrow the caution bred by all his training.



Bathing beauty: Bryan LeBoeuf's *Vessel*, 2004.

Currin territory; it's what you get after mixing Andrew Wyeth, Eric Fischl, *Boys' Life* magazine and *The Twilight Zone*. That is to say, straight-laced, poker-faced, all-American hokum.

Vessel (2004), a smallish horizon-

Bryan LeBoeuf: *Vessels* is at the Miller/Geisler Gallery, 511 West 25th Street, until June 26.