



Bill Jacobson: *Thought Series #2580*, 1998, gelatin silver print, 24 by 20 inches; at Julie Saul.

mastery, affecting a kind of visual slouch. There is nothing of the slacker about Jacobson's recent work. Instead, it seems literally polished, buffed to a dull sheen that is painterly in the tradition of Academic canvases' licked finishes. If less animated than some contemporary photography, it is more intent.

There is, indeed, a hint of the heroic in the gaunt, Gallic, vaguely Duchampian profile shown in one photograph, and an innocent earnestness in the straight-on portrait of a youthful man. One alert young sitter gazes thoughtfully, if a little stagily, to his left;

the least schematic. These renderings are clearly the product of careful observation and technical expertise. Gallo has made sculptures as well as paintings on canvas, but it may be that in paper he has found the optimum medium for his pensive, detailed, somewhat nostalgic meditations. One wonders what would happen if he followed this propensity for painted observation and dropped his less-appealing play on antiquity. —Vincent Katz

### Bill Jacobson at Julie Saul

Eleven photographs were on view in this show: half a dozen are head shots, three are images of water, one shows a single hand and one a seated, naked body. All are titled *Thought Series*, and all are gelatin silver prints. The range of tones is narrow and the passage from light to shadow surpassingly subtle; there are none of the sun-struck, bleached whites that have appeared in Jacobson's previous prints, nor does he reach for velvety blacks. These photographs do retain the soft focus that has characterized his work to date, but their closest affinity is with paintings; Gerhard Richter's photo-based portraits of dead nurses and German terrorists in particular come to mind.

Much of the currently prevalent shot-from-the-hip photography, obliquely framed, loosely focused and indifferently exposed, is meant to deemphasize its makers' technical

another eyeballs the viewer with a resolute, mournful stare. All the images are tightly cropped, in one case so radically that only chin and mouth make the cut. In the water shots, tight framing results in limited expanses of rippled sea that are without shoreline or horizon. Again, a painter comes to mind, Vija Celmins, whose images of water and sky seem close in spirit to the preternaturally still, almost stony (as in polished granite) surfaces that Jacobson attains. The vertical orientation of his water images further weakens the connection with natural bodies of water and their earthbound, lateral flow.

These mute seascapes are the first of Jacobson's photographs to depart from the human subject. But they were interspersed with the other photographs here in a carefully paced, linear sequence that reintroduced a measure of the narrative complexity that marked some of Jacobson's previous work. Though figure groups and social situations are dispensed with, the relationships between individual moments in this series—the passage from meditative face to watery deep to the lone dangling arms—are richly theatrical.

—Nancy Princenthal

### Laurie Simmons at Metro Pictures

During the late 1970s, Laurie Simmons began photographing miniature tableaux, using dolls and dollhouse furniture as props.

In her latest work, Simmons has returned to the same subject, minus the dolls. The new photographs are of dramatically lit toy castles and architectural models of postwar suburban homes. While her earlier work commented on the objectification and fetishization of women, vacillating between nostalgia for and feminist critique of the stereotypical 1950s/1960s housewife, this new work seems apolitical. And while earlier Simmons rendered her claustrophobic interiors on a smallish scale—so that form followed content—now she opts to monumentalize that subject in large compositions that range from 20 by 30 to 47 by 60 inches. The result is a nightmarish atmosphere in which one is left wondering where the people are who (ostensibly) should inhabit these eerily empty dwellings.

One series, titled "The Deluxe Redding House" (1998), explores the primary-colored interior of a Bauhaus-inspired dollhouse, replete with wood paneling, Mondrian-like wallpaper, fireplace, Breuer-inspired furniture, dishes, American eagle plaque and tiny, framed "paintings." Simmons offers us 10 views from a bird's-eye perspective. In the "White House/Green Lawn" series, which consists of four close-up views of a miniature suburban home with peeling white paint, wood shingles, plastic roof and black shutters, the window shades are all pulled down; long shadows augment the uneasy quality of this vacant scene.

*Three Castles* (1998) looks like an extreme close-up of a snowglobe. A tiny white castle, located front center and framed by two others at mid-distance, is dramatically lit from above, revealing translucent blue towers, pink flags and drawbridge. The scene is covered in a fresh blanket of "snow," which continues to fall in this post-apocalyptic fairy tale.

In *Midlake* (1997) a mannequin's head, complete with black wig, red lipstick and eye makeup, emerges from a lake of grayish-blue water. This image may seem to hark back to Simmons's pool series from

1981—a group of whimsical images showing multiple figurines sinking underwater. However, this doll is alone, in the middle of a lake, looking like a floating, decapitated head whose constant bobbing creates concentric circles in the water.

The recent photographs may lack the more overt critical subtext which has characterized Simmons's work since the 1970s, but, with these gorgeously creepy and oddly seductive color-saturated images, she is certainly onto something new.

—Maura Reilly

### Gelatin at P.S. 1 and Spencer Brownstone

Some of the most interesting work around right now is being made by a fresh batch of young artists who are subsuming their individual egos to collectives such as London's BANK, the fur-



Laurie Simmons: *White House/Green Lawn (view 4)*, 1998, ilfochrome, 20 by 30 inches; at Metro Pictures.

niture-design team Lo/Tek and the Viennese group Gelatin. Gelatin, whose members are Ali Janka, Florian Reither, Tobias Urban and Wolfgang Gantner, was the hot ticket last summer (during the seasonal art-world doldrums) with "Percutaneous Delights," their show of large sculptures, often made from cheap or discarded materials, in the courtyard at P.S. 1. The group toys with its audience—sometimes with a hint of menace—in works that seem rooted in boyish, backyard hijinks and fun-house playfulness.

On Saturday afternoons, the courtyard resembled a backyard party thanks to P.S. 1's "Warm Up" series, a rotating roster of DJs that attracted the hip and