

Reviews

Dawit L. Petros and Bryan Jackson

Alexander Gray Associates, through Sept 8 (see Chelsea).

In the first room of this double debut, Dawit L. Petros obliquely evokes his own experience as an Eritrean emigrant to Canada. A photograph found on the Internet of two black climbers flanking a wooden "welcome" sign in the snows of Mount Kilimanjaro, for example, is juxtaposed with two larger photos by the artist himself: One shows a wordless replica of the sign erected on the frozen tundra near Churchill, Manitoba. The other features a dark-



Dawit L. Petros, *Proposition 1: Mountain*
Photo: Courtesy Alexander Gray Associates, New York

skinned hand holding out a mountain-shaped pile of salt over a California salt flat. A horizon line shared by all three pictures continues on an adjacent wall as a division between areas painted blue and white, which miraculously become an expansive, abstract landscape. A video synthesizes the artist's winter train trip to Churchill, along Hudson Bay, subtly interweaving nature, displacement and whiteness—both literal and metaphorical.

In the next gallery, Bryan Jackson casts two Bratz dolls in *Softly*, a shorthand gay love story in the form of a music video. Accompanied by an electronica soundtrack, the video features a meet-cute via instant-messaging and a shower scene. Jackson films his vapid, big-eyed actors in pitch-perfect sets, including the doll-sized bedroom (exhibited in the gallery), outfitted with a miniature Eames chair, an orange messenger bag on the carpeted floor, and a bookshelf with tiny volumes on Derek Jarman. At the end of the video, the camera pulls back to reveal a klieg light and one of the dolls in a director's chair, suggesting a metafiction that is both preposterously campy and strangely affecting.