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DAMIAN LOEB: Synesthesia, Parataxic Distortion, and the Shadow at Acquavella Gallery

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The clever imitation of a movie poster advertising Damian Loeb's sixth New York solo show creates disproportionate expectations. With its portentous Damien Hirst-like title, "Synesthesia, Parataxic Distortion, and the Shadow," it promises something more spectacular than the pleasant, conscientiously well made, illustrative paintings that make up this exhibition.

Mr. Loeb produces what you might call Photorealist Melodrama. There is not much action in his paintings, but he has a cinematographer's eye for suspenseful scenes. "The Color of Money" — named, like a number of other canvases here, after a movie and, at 3 by 7 feet, proportioned like a movie screen — depicts a car wrapped in a fabric cover parked in the driveway of a ranch house surrounded by palm trees. With a busy sky of gray clouds and a low, glaring sun, it gives you the feeling that some momentarily noirish event is about to happen.

The least interesting pictures include people. The duck's eye view of a young woman in a bikini floating on a raft in a pool does not transcend its soft-porn inspiration. But "Straw Dogs," with its scruffy hayfield and the distant silhouette of a church steeple rising above leafless, early winter trees under scudding clouds, exudes a stirring romance, part Sam Peckinpah, part Thomas Hardy.