

# ARTPULSE

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Katherine Taylor, *Almost White*, 2015, oil on canvas, 48" x 36."



Katherine Taylor, *Guard Rail*, 2015, oil on canvas 48" x 42." Images are courtesy of the artist and Marcia Wood Gallery.

## KATHERINE TAYLOR: MOVING HORIZON

Marcia Wood Gallery - Midtown, Atlanta Ga.

By Jason Hoelscher

The automobile has played a variety of roles in modern art, whether the birth of Futurism after Filippo Tommaso Marinetti crashed his speeding car into a ditch in 1909, or Tony Smith's 1951 experience of suburban sublimity while driving on the unfinished New Jersey Turnpike. In her exhibition, "Moving Horizon," Katherine Taylor uses the automobile as a starting point as well, albeit in a somewhat less dramatic fashion: the point here seems less on epiphany than on prompting a new look at things easily taken for granted.

The paintings in "Moving Horizon" range from blurred but recognizable images on the one hand, to paintings that for all intents and purposes look like brushy, out of focus abstractions on the other. All are unified not only by a very limited color palette, but by the fact that they depict scenes glimpsed through an automobile window, at different speeds. The approach to landscape here is complicated—not only must the details be taken in quickly, but because over a half century the types of landscape that bound highways have settled into a kind of homeostasis—there often is not much to look at on either side of a highway.

This self-similar sparseness of the landscape combines with the fast-glance look necessitated by the speed of passage, allowing Taylor to focus on the space, paint and surface without getting bogged down in the tight rendering of detail. The most detailed components of these paintings are those elements that are closest, either the edge of the pavement or a guardrail; these, however, move by so quickly and are so linear that they appear more as abstract geometry than as

representation. While elements farther away have more variety, they are blurred by distance and so dissolve into their own, different kind of abstraction. These inversely proportionate relationships between depiction, speed and space are shuffled, subtly folding back and contradicting each other. Determining the spatial registers is complex, like determining the space of a Möbius strip seen edgewise.

There is a nice pun that arises from the fact that each of the paintings depicts a scene glimpsed through a car window—an interesting update of Alberti's Renaissance notion of the picture plane as window. This pun is all the better since it is not specifically pointed out anywhere, but only emerges after a bit of consideration. Formalist puns and complex space aside, Taylor uses various strategies to assert the paintings as paintings. Seen from afar the paintings have a shimmering softness to them, which pulls the viewer in for a closer, absorptive look. Up close, however, each painting has some variety of marks that push the viewer back out, or which interrupt one's absorption into the painting. For one thing, the final layer of brushwork on each canvas is a fairly even horizontal mark that zips laterally right across the canvas, a materially present X-axis that counterpoints the desire to push back into the Y-axis of the atmospheric picture space. If these are picture planes as windows, the brushwork functions like streaks or smudges on poorly cleaned glass—the desire to look through the surface is frustrated by the qualities of the surface, but the luminosity of the depiction draws the viewer back in, only to be drawn back, and so on. This oscillation makes for a much more dynamic viewing experience than the initially serene first glimpse might suggest, making for a very compelling exhibition that works as both a quiet meditation on space and a complex consideration on frenetic speed. ■

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