



*Breathing Space 221*, 2006, Oil on Gessobord, 56 x 45 inches

## Dallas

### Janaki Lennie

#### HOLLY JOHNSON GALLERY

1411 Dragon Street

December 1–December 30

Houston artist Janaki Lennie's latest exhibition of suburban landscapes proves an engrossing portrayal of the sometimes copacetic, sometimes strained relationship between nature and human industry. Lennie paints fragments of trees and buildings, pushing both subjects to the edges of the canvas. The center is occupied by large expanses of subtly gradated sky. Yet this is no ordinary vista of pale blue and puffy clouds. Instead it is blank and appears artificially lit. The unusually detailed renderings of dull browns and dirty greens make the atmosphere feel thick and ominous, as if the air were dangerously toxic. Ironically, the title of the show is "Breathing Space," a reference to the diminishing area between two worlds perpetually encroaching upon each other. The paintings in the exhibition with the greatest impact, however, are not the images where nature merely abuts factory structures or oil refineries, but rather those in which the interaction is muddled. In several canvases, dappled tree limbs appear entangled with the soaring metal of radio towers or tall street lamps, mutating each distinct entity into some living hybrid. These odd moments inject a hint of science fiction into Lennie's art (imagine the lamps as apocryphal UFOs). Ultimately, the tension between familiarity and fiction is what gives these paintings their lasting impression—a meditative quietude sharpened with foreboding uncertainty.

— Matthew Bourbon