



## CHICAGO

### Whitney Bedford: "East of Eden" at Carrie Secrist Gallery

The making of all four of Whitney Bedford's large paintings in this intriguing exhibition follow the same three steps. First comes the background all-over color field, a monochromatic edge-to-edge-to-edge-to-edge that serves as its tonal core. These were four remarkably subtle shades, ranging from a kind of warm peachy orangeish-red to a subtle gray with a touch of violet, and from a purplish brown to a brittle bone white, all shades more easy to enjoy than to describe. And then—and who saw this coming?—comes a virulent outpouring of a kind of wet drawing, as Bedford makes innumerable fastidious short and staccato-like strokes, line after line done in one shade (usually gold, in one case sort of purple) of an opaque paint marker, that describes a bit of landscape, usually a copse of trees and some surrounding terrain (no figures, no animals, just nature). And then atop that landscape drawing is a smaller and more occasional passage of brushy painterly oil painting, seemingly rapidly and carelessly applied, both reinforcing and somehow undercutting the landscape beneath it.

And it works. The monochromatic field and the monochromatic 'drawing' elide gracefully into one another, sort of like one of those white-chalk-on-blue-paper drawings from the Renaissance, the background both color field and sky or ambient. *Tender is the Night*, (2015), is well titled, the creamy grayish backdrop a perfect relief to the gold drawing of trees, the latter including spiky palm trees and the like (from

Bedford's milieu in Los Angeles?), all caught in that crepuscular glow of evening. More forbidding and moody is *The I do - I will*, (2016) (its title a reference to the replies made during wedding vows?) is more melancholy in tone, with tall trees like abject sunflowers reaching up into a fiery sky, and some rich green and blue gray slashing plant below. If, as the title of Bedford's exhibition might intimate, these are landscapes from east of Eden (that's where Cain fled to after murdering his brother, according to Genesis 4:16) then it is a tautly evocative and expectant place, where something mysterious seems about to happen.

—JAMES YOOD

"THE I DO - I WILL," 2016,

**Whitney Bedford**

INK AND OIL ON CANVAS ON PANEL, 5' X 8'

PHOTO: EVAN BEDFORD COURTESY CARRIE SECRIST GALLERY