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WEEKEND Arts FINE ARTS
LEISURE

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INTRODUCTIONS

David Cabrera Selects: Dawit L. Petros

Bruce Yonemoto Selects: Bryan Jackson

Alexander Gray Associates
526 West 26th Street, Chelsea
Through Sept. 8

These side-by-side debuts introduce two young artists selected to show by artists already represented by the gallery. Their videos and photographs both tackle the theme of identity, but with contrasting degrees of finish, openness and promise.

The stronger impression is made by Dawit L. Petros (selected by David Cabrera), whose family emigrated from Eritrea, in East Africa, where he was born, to Canada. Culling from several Conceptual Art influences and moving back and forth between Africa and Canada, his work riffs enchantingly on whiteness in terms of climate, race and perception.

He substitutes a salt flat baking in the sun for a snow field; pays homage to two black mountain climbers who ascended the highest peak in Africa; and documents a train trip from Winnipeg to Churchill, Manitoba, that was the subject of one of Glenn Gould's radio broadcasts. Mr. Petros recorded this journey with a stationary video camera aimed out the window for the whole trip, using only ambient sound. The nearly abstract landscape whizzes by, mostly snow with a few trees.

Opposite, Mr. Petros divides a wall into areas of white and blue, like snow (or salt) and sky, providing an immediate experience of the illusion of vastness.

Bryan Jackson (selected by Bruce Yonemoto) presents an animated video using dolls, along with stills from it; it is about two gay men who meet, part and long for each other. Two of the sets for the video — a well-appointed bedroom and a shower — are also included.

Mr. Jackson's work has a wonderful noirish feeling and is in some ways more accomplished than Mr. Petros's. It is well versed in the setup conventions, but that's just it. It feels slick and impersonal, a composite of known factors and effects. Mr. Petros's work has a sense of authenticity and possibility that experience can't buy.

ROBERTA SMITH