

reviews: new york**Eric Zener****Gallery Henoch**

Although almost all of Eric Zener's paintings represent people and water, his works are far from monotonous. A

picture like *Anonymous Happy People* (2008) is an unspecific beach scene, and *First Day of Summer* (2010) is not much more than an outsize snapshot rendered

in oil paint. However, *The Passage* (2009), with its interest in contemporary athleticism and the painterly rendering of optical effects, reveals a greater sophistication.

Once Zener's figures are stripped of their bathing suits, they lose their immediate familiarity. The women in *And the Waves Keep Rolling By* (2010) and the significantly titled *Free* (2009), for example, occupy a far more romantic domain than do their sunbathing sisters and might well be mythological characters.

The romance was even more pronounced in the two paintings shown here in which water was not even implied. The young woman who is depicted in *Somewhere Else* (2010) sinks under bedsheets rather than the surface of a swimming pool, and she consequently takes on a vague and dreamy vulnerability.

The related picture *Carriage* (2010), which depicts an empty bed, was ar-



Eric Zener, *Carriage*, 2010,
oil on canvas, 54" x 66". Gallery Henoch.

guably the best painting in the show. Technically, Zener's brushy rendering of the complex interactions of whites, creams, and grays in the tangled bed linen was much more relaxed than what he risked elsewhere, but it was principally on the level of content that the picture really scored. Without human figures, although the work is heavily loaded with implied human presence, *Carriage* broaches a poetry of ambiguity absent from most of this show. Who, we wonder, occupied this bed, and under what circumstances? Were they alone or accompanied? Where are they now, and what are they doing?

It is by posing such questions that Zener may well have achieved something quite novel and important in his art.

—Robert Ayers