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North by Art Quest

What's up and down on NoMi nights and days

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At a time when painting seems to be metamorphosing into myriad subcategories, few of them include direct figurative images Set Out of the ordinary. Christian Curiel is an exception to this contemporary rule and his exhibit at Leonard Tachmes Gallery proves it.

Curiel, who usually explores clannish young male scenarios of social and sexual discovery, now moves his style further on into more subtle intuitive visions. In addition his skill at overcoming the troublesome paradox between private and public by building compelling intimacy in public environments is surprising.

The four canvases take us through various events in the life of a young boy (probably Curiel himself, but also any of us): all these naughty things boys that age do, like getting under a young woman's dress in one uncanny bluish promlike scene in *You Can Have Your Cake*. And who could turn away from that shirtless boy wearing camouflage pants, lovingly embracing a tree's trunk in the middle of the forest? Between *the Vernal Equinox* and *the Summer Solstice* reveals an exceptional moment of abandon, when one feels protected by one's privacy; Curiel gets you involved by making the scene seem arranged especially for each of us.

I see what I'm not supposed to see in *Food for the Gods*. The boy next to his trailer home, shirtless and barefooted, kneels on a moist ground with a bird in his mouth, but he looks straight at me with bulging reddish eyes, baffled and defiant like a predator caught in the act - I'm as baffled and shocked as he is. This is primal art, making us aware of the process of seeing.