Lowly resume

Bath

by Nathan Matteson
from the **New City**, November, 2000

"OK, these are some weird paintings. They put us in a position that's not the most comfortable place to be. It's something that probably doesn't happen enough in commercial galleries. Lowly is giving us a narrative -- a bath scene -- a fairly typical subject for painting.

But in each of the six pictures we're left somewhat in the cold -- we're not given the whole story. It's mostly through severe cropping and unusual perspective that we're kept at an unusual distance from the events at hand: Three pictures that look straight down into the tub from an unvom- fortably close distance directly above; one close up of two hands holding each other; and a face framed withing soapy water. Both the directness of the paint handling and the idea of flesh touching wet flesh suggest an initmacy that stands in contrast to the discomfiture that is forced upon the viewer, for we seem both intusive and extraneous. Within this, there's a pleasant ambiguity: who's bathing who and, of course, why? The situation, and our viola- tion of it, finally become startlingly clear in

the soapy portrait of the anrogynous and
retarded bather. The bath, as conventional subject for painting, has probably been long under-used. Thank God somebody's out there to pick up the slack."

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Nathan Matteson is a Chicago based critic.

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