

Mystery in the images

Brad Phillips is provocatively coy in his painting show at LaMontagne Gallery. His wife appears in many of the works, but we never see her face clearly. In "park and 79th", he beautifully captures the planes and gleam of her bare back as she dresses; in "no comebacks," we glimpse her in a mirror, climbing stairs in a sweatshirt and underwear, but we can't see her eyes.

Amid these works, Phillips throws in text paintings, such as "vancouver scene," copied from graffiti: "Wendy I love you and I miss you Jamesy." Add in a still life or two and an ominous interior, and the canvases coalesce into a dark, angst-ridden short story full of obfuscations and longing. The paintings work best together; individually, the mystery is diluted.

Conversely, with Fred Muram's photographs, also at LaMontagne, one would be enough. Muram shoots people kissing their ceilings. A single image is pleasingly odd, even funny. There are four here, and the artist seems to be trying too hard, like a comedian who stumbles with his delivery and tells the same joke again. And again.



Brad Phillips's painting "Roots and Dye" in his show "Journey Into Whatever" at LaMontagne Gallery.

HELEN MIRANDA WILSON: Halos

At: Victoria Munroe Fine Art, 179 Newbury St., through June 20. 617-523-0661, www.victoriamunroefineart.com

BRAD PHILLIPS: Journey Into Whatever

FRED MURAM: Kissing the Ceiling

At: LaMontagne Gallery, 555 East 2nd St., South Boston, through June 13. 617-464-4640, www.lamontagnegallery.com

JOHN OBUCK: Small Works

At: OH+T Gallery, 450 Harrison Ave., through June 20. 617-423-1677, www.ohtgallery.com