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Robert Bordo: Three Point Turn

◆ Alexander and Bonin
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Several other artists come to mind when you're looking at the paintings of Robert Bordo (b. 1949), an old New York hand who teaches at Cooper Union. Mr. Bordo, though, doesn't just accumulate the apparent influences of Milton Avery, Philip Guston and Alex Katz, but synthesizes them into something pleasantly, if not radically, original.

"Mogul" (2012), for instance, is a 4½-by-5½-foot oil painting that seems agreeably smaller because it's so informally friendly. In what has become Mr. Bordo's trademark muted color—earthy but never dingy—it depicts in the most basic,

off-hand manner a lumpy landscape, the kind skiers do tricks on when it is covered by snow. The artist accurately describes "Mogul" as "a kind of naked, cartoon landscape...[which] refers to a rich and powerful man or woman and also to a pile of mud, a morass." Whatever the picture's implied social comment, aesthetically it is downright likeable.

Mr. Bordo has also conjured up a gimmick, which he uses in a few pictures: the landscape viewed through, or around, either one of its mirrors or the fan shape left by a car's windshield wiper. And guess what? In Mr. Bordo's avuncularly witty style, it works.