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# ARTnews

## Erik Benson

**Finesilver**  
**Houston**

Erik Benson presents a persuasive, dystopian take on the American landscape. In his paintings on canvas and paper, the normalcy of suburban views dominated by edifices of glass and steel is rudely interrupted—marked by decay or overwhelmed by ominous emissions suggestive of pollution or explosion.

The contrast between airbrushed ground and overlaid acrylic cutouts lends



Erik Benson, *Americaland*, 2007, acrylic on canvas, 46" x 60".  
Finesilver.

Benson's landscapes a graphic punch. Painted on glass and cut loose with an X-Acto knife, the transfers are applied like decals. These sharp-edged silhouettes dominated by shades of brown, gray, or green stand out from the backgrounds to create an effect that is both laconic and surprisingly graceful.

In many compositions the horizon is nowhere to be seen. Details are pushed to the edge, slung low to the ground, or hoisted to the top of the painting. What

fills the center are voidlike smoke plumes or barrier walls. *Americaland* (2007) is a vignette of lost innocence, youth, and exuberance. The composition is dominated by a looming, grid-

ded retaining wall stained with organic ooze and graffiti tags. In *Parking Lot Fields* (2007), suggestions of a prosaic suburban strip mall—seagulls, treetops, car-lot banner flags, and light poles—are overwhelmed by an ominous spew of laterally drifting black smoke.

Benson's what-is-wrong-with-this-picture sensibility works best when the



Peter Calaboyias, *BA*

out-of-place is less noticeable. At first glance, with its wintry, leafless trees and non-descript apartment building standing before a cloud-studded sky, *Flight Patterns* (2007) is a rose-tinted study in late-afternoon harmony. Benson punctuates this reverie with a commercial jet that, depending on how you read it, is either banking sharply or falling to the earth.

—Christopher French

## Peter Calaboyias

**International Images**  
**Sewickley, Pennsylvania**

After nearly a half century of working with bronze, steel, aluminum, marble, and wood, the Greek-born sculptor Peter