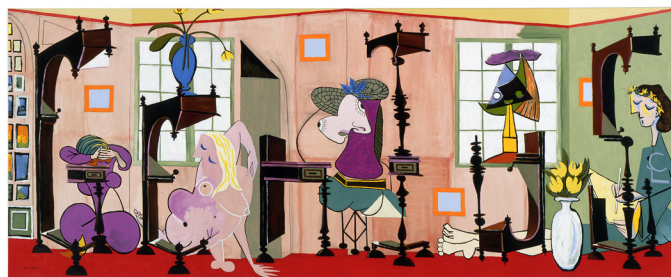


**Sean Landers**

Andrea Rosen Gallery, through May 19  
(see Chelsea).

For more than a decade, Sean Landers has provided an intensely self-conscious account of the ups and downs of being an artist—offering to great acclaim self-obsessed texts that are at once brutally honest and smart-alecky. Now, Landers's voice is changing. He's married and has a daughter, his father died recently, and he's wading through a mid-career period in which not all the reviews are raves. The arrival of midlife often inspires an all-out defense of one's beleaguered ambitions, and Landers rises to the occasion with a solo-show tour de force that is as sad to behold as it is over the top: He wants to be Picasso.

Landers creates six large paintings using imagery from the Spaniard's works, though wisely, he doesn't try to challenge the master. *War and Peace* bristles with *Guernica*-like horses but is



Sean Landers, *Genius*, 2001.

coloring-book bright and facile. The enormous *Genius*—in which models from each of Picasso's periods pose in a large studio—is a standout. More important than the canvases is a Landers monologue that is piped into the gallery, in which he reads a letter to Picasso (the text of which appears in the painting *On the Wall Above*). Taking a cue from Oliver Stone's *Platoon*, Landers accompanies his dramatic reading with Samuel Barber's "Adagio for Strings."

The music is a perfect match for Landers, whose words ricochet like

pinballs from send-up to seriousness. It's a laugh when Landers asks, "Who will be this century's Picasso? I am who you are looking for." (Though what mid-career artist has not, in a moment of bitterness, uttered the same?) But then Landers hits you with pure sincerity: "Let every artwork I ever make embody the abject tragedy of my father's death, the joy of my daughter's life and the beauty of my wife." Suddenly, it strikes you that everybody's favorite bad boy is all grown up.—Robert Mahoney