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## How it all happened, or not

(<http://www.suntimes.com/entertainment/nance/415413,CST-FTR-art06.article>)

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BY [KEVIN NANCE](#) Critic-at-Large

In "Low Tide," the centerpiece of her haunting solo show at the Linda Warren Gallery, painter Jennifer Present depicts a wedding party that's both generic and disturbing.

The bride and groom pose in prescribed attitudes on a beach, everyone in tropical duds and a seascape in the background, and yet you sense that it's just that -- a background, projected there by the artist, and that her feelings about marriage can be inferred from the sailboat foundering over the bride's shoulder. The guests are shown in noirish black-and-white, as if they were in a different dimension -- which, in a sense, they are.

"Pro-ject," Present's title for this collection of 17 meticulously crafted oil paintings using projected imagery as both tool and subject, considers the ways in which today's mediascape alternately augments and drains meaning from real life. The show also literalizes how we project our fears and desires onto the screen of the everyday, with or without the help of lamps and lenses -- blurring the lines between fact and fantasy, conscious and subconscious, what happened and how we remember it. Several of Present's subjects are held rapt by the diorama of their own memories -- much of it suspect, half-hidden in shadows or, as in "Blue Room," a ghostly aquamarine.

The effect is dreamlike and detached, but her detachment is more like Edward Hopper's than Andy Warhol's; there's a longing behind it, and a lush kind of sadness. In "Flight," a woman stares out at a bland daytime scene while behind her a dark forest is illuminated by birds seemingly made of light. You can almost hear their wings rustle, like static electricity.

[knance@suntimes.com](mailto:knance@suntimes.com)

### 'JENNIFER PRESENT: PRO-JECT'

#### RECOMMENDED

**When:** Through June 23

**Where:** Linda Warren Gallery, 1052 W. Fulton Market

**Admission:** Free

**Call:** (312) 432-9500

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