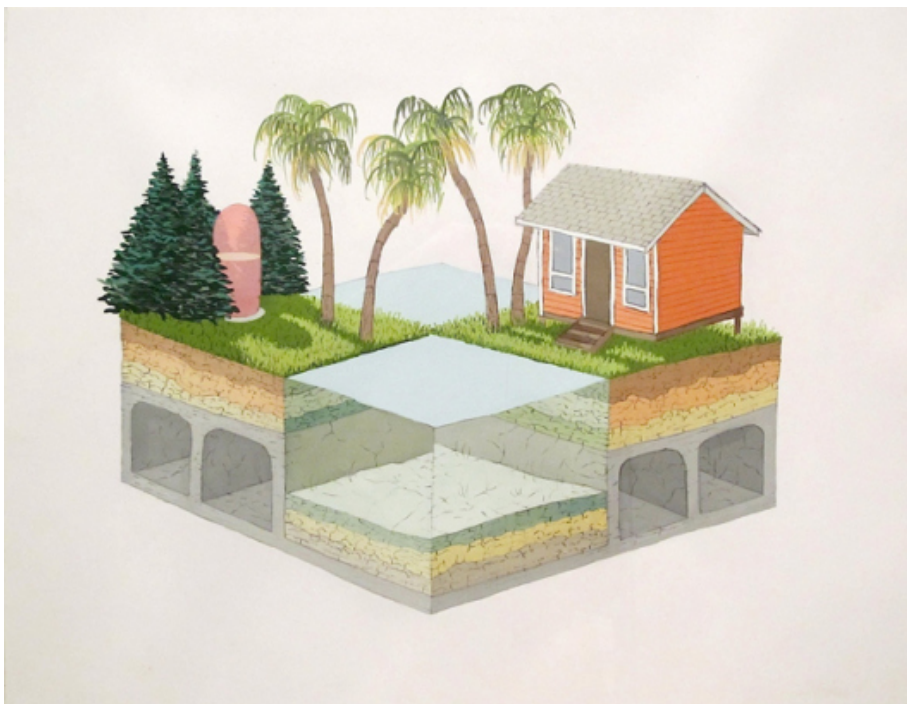




Choose Your Own Imperfection: Joseph Phillips at Tiny Park by [New American Paintings](#)
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Tired of Big City confines, but reluctant to embrace the Baby Boomers' love for suburban sprawl? Joseph Phillips (*NAP* #84 and 96) presents a solution in [Infinite Perfection](#), his debut solo exhibition at Tiny Park in Austin. In just eight tidily composed works on paper and a modular wall piece, Phillips locks into that balance of manmade convenience and nature's comfort, with results both blissfully utopian and chillingly severe. — *Brian Fee, Austin contributor*

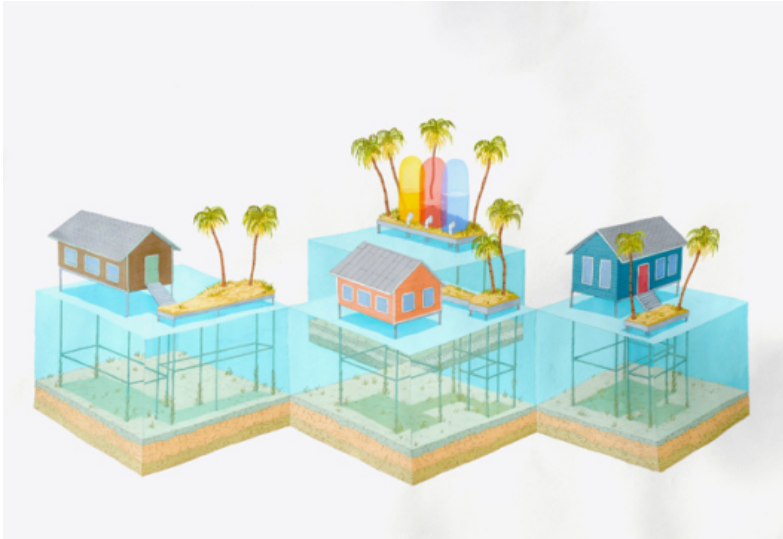


Variety Acre with Cabin and Tank, 2013, Gouache, graphite, and ink on paper, 15 x 19 inches.

Which do you prefer? The pines or the palm trees? How about both, in the slightly off-kilter topology within *Variety Acre with Cabin and Tank*, immediately to the right of the gallery entryway and a taut encapsulation of the show's theme. Even that '50s-era advertising lingo — “variety acre” — works wonders in echoing the plainly picturesque scene.

In gouache, graphite, and ink, Phillips captures an idyllic habitat. There's the cookie-cutter cabin, perhaps extruded from the factory in orange vinyl siding, its door open to the air. There's the quartet of palms, casting elongated shadows across the lawn. There's the other lawn, containing two of the palms plus the pine trees and a red, translucent “power tank”, arranged in a checkerboard pattern diagonal from the cabin. Filling the cubular void in the foreground and back are two plots of water, mirror grey and surface-featureless yet revealing layered sediment and an undercoating of concrete deep below. I felt a strong *Solaris* vibe off this work, as in: everything is here, so what more do you need? Perhaps it's too complete.

***Lagoon Outposts*, 2012, Gouache, graphite, and ink on paper, 37 x 49**



Isolated bites of dissected landscapes are a constant in Phillips' oeuvre, as is the recurring minimal color palette of healthy greens and browns, blank blues, reds and oranges seemingly culled from paint chip samples. But he eschews the whimsy permeating his earlier exhibitions (beaches built up like film sets; a fairytale blast shelter) with a stark seriousness. That's not to say fantastical compositions like *Lagoon Outposts* aren't fun to look at — and the calming breeze is nearly audible throughout — but in emphasizing the

numbing versatility of these idealized self-sufficiencies, I believe Phillips is highlighting the fallacy of utopia. *Lagoon Outposts'* cabins on stilts, with their miniscule plots of land, and the trio of candy-toned energy tanks (the artificially colored elements here) seemingly purifying the crystalline water, feel more sect than suburbia.

***Variable Landscape*, 2013, Plywood, paint, foam, stain, plastic plants, mounted giclee prints, 110 x 192 inches.**

The modular wall mural *Variable Landscape* is the most literal definition of interchangeable options from a limited pool of choices. It's Phillips' largest work to date: a field of diamond-shaped stained wood, or painted accents, giclee siding, plastic flowers (some clearly of the undersea variety) embedded in foam "soil", etc. Tiny Park is selling each "parcel" uniquely in any desired arrangement. Nature and landscaping all in one, a hyperbole of prefab, modular living. Yet, if you look long enough at cheerily titled compositions like *Country Cabin with Cistern and Shelter* (with a cistern *and* a shelter!), the bright paint-jobs and lush wildlife are undeniably serene. If this is the future of suburbia, I can't say I'm not a fan. And so what if it's imperfect? Flawlessness is so boring!





Joseph Phillips | *Country Cabin with Cistern and Shelter*, 2013, Gouache, graphite, and ink on paper, 15 x 19

[Joseph Phillips](#) received a B.S. in Art & Art History from Skidmore College, New York. His work was previously included in *22 to Watch* at Arthouse at The Jones Center in 2005; and *New American Talent* at the Austin Museum of Art, curated by Anne Ellegood, Associate Curator at Hirschhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C., in 2007; in addition to numerous solo, two-artist, and group exhibitions in Texas. Phillips lives and works in Austin and is a member of three-artist collective SODALITAS. [Infinite Perfection](#) at Tiny Park continues through February 23.



Brian Fee is an art punk currently based in Austin, TX. His culture blog [Fee's List](#) covers his three loves (art, film, live music) occurring in his other three loves (the Lone Star State, the Big Apple, and Tokyo).