

RYAN LEE

RYAN LEE GALLERY LLC
515 WEST 26TH STREET
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Josh Dorman

Retrospective Futurology

September 5 - October 12, 2019

Opening Reception: Thursday, September 5, 6-8pm

RYAN LEE is pleased to announce *Retrospective Futurology*, an exhibition of new paintings by Josh Dorman. Known for the alternate realities and fantastical creatures he creates by combining antique found imagery with drawing and painting, Dorman introduces an additional dimension into these new paintings through the use of poured resin. As the exhibition's title suggests, in this latest body of work Dorman continues his interrogation of human history, weaving cautionary tales into his multivalent visions of a dystopian future.

In his new body of work, Dorman cuts into the painting surface, generating pockets and pools of space. Into these, he layers collage and paint with multiple pours of liquid resin, building reliquary-like time capsules and trapping imagery like insects in amber. His recurring emerald and crimson lagoons and sinkholes are seen simultaneously from above and below. Equal parts water and air, they contain birds, sea creatures and heaping piles of debris: defunct machines, broken statuary, gears, cages, cells, and fungi.

Allusions to issues like sea level rise, species extinction, war, and human arrogance are ever-present and never heavy-handed. Form, color and an Eastern-influenced landscape sensibility seize the eye first. The stories layer metaphorically and literally in ink, acrylic, resin and antique collage fragments: player piano scrolls, topographic maps, 1920's patent pages, dissected animals. With Dorman, the closer you look, the more you see. With panels ranging from 12 inches to 5 feet, each painting contains worlds within worlds, bringing to mind the twisted fantasies of Bosch and Breugel.

The iconic piece, *How This Will End*, is a speculative look into the future from deep in an imaginary past. Hybrid animals march up a vertical cliff side, cuticle-sized fishermen haul in a colossal, teeming net from a dark blue watery cavern, a battle of buffoonish soldiers rages by an ancient city above; below, symmetrically placed inch-deep black resin caves encase nightmarish visions. In the sky, Turner-esque clouds churn, and a flock of birds swarms from the horizon.

Though spurred by contemporaneous concerns, Dorman's paintings are temporal anomalies. They mine the past for some hint of future truth, wary of human hubris while enticed by human ingenuity. Dorman's amalgamations of whimsy and dread come together to produce a state he has referred to as 'joyful apocalypse', and while Dorman is careful to avoid any overt or prescriptive morals or meaning, his narratives are clear and always revelatory. As the novelist Michael Chabon described, "each of Josh Dorman's works, like a dream, is at once a window and a mirror, opening onto a landscape of chimeras and strange juxtapositions, never before seen yet instantly recognizable, as familiar as the outlines of our own secret reflections."

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Josh Dorman (b. 1966 Baltimore, MD) is an American artist who recontextualizes antique images within fantastical drawn and painted worlds. Dorman sources collages, engravings and diagrams culled from textbooks, manuals and documents that were published prior to the widespread use of photography. He considers unfamiliar, obsolete and cryptic systems to inform these choices and ultimately his process, resulting in non-linear, multi-layered narratives that explore the mythical landscape and notions of collapsed time, altered boundaries and dream states. Dualities of chaos and order, natural and manmade, fluidity and restraint reoccur and create tension in his collaged universes. Essential to his oeuvre, Dorman's references to artists Paul Klee and Pieter Bruegel, as well as to Sieneese art and Chinese landscapes, transcend history and time.

Dorman graduated Skidmore College in 1988 and received his MFA from Queens College in 1992. He has exhibited at Craft and Folk Art Museum, CA; CUE Art Foundation, NY; The Drawing Center, NY; Katonah Museum, NY; The National Academy Museum, NY; Tang Museum, NY; Trierenberg Corporate Kunsthalle, AU; and Weatherspoon Art Museum, NC. His work is included in permanent collections at the Butler Institute of American Art, OH; International Collage Center, PA; Minneapolis Institute of Art, MN; Naples Museum, FL; and Springfield Art Museum, MO. Dorman is currently an artist in residence at the Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture, ME. A solo exhibition of Dorman's paintings from his series *Portraits From the Memory Bridge* will be on view at the Longview Museum of Fine Arts, TX. He lives and works in New York, NY.

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