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CULTURE MONSTER

ALL ARTS, ALL THE TIME

Review: Josh Dorman and David Bailin explore metaphor at Koplin Del Rio

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David Bailin, "Revision", 2012, charcoal and coffee on prepared paper, 53" x 54"
(Koplin Del Rio Gallery, Culver City)

By Leah Ollman

July 20, 2012 | 5:00 p.m.

Side-by-side solo shows by Josh Dorman and David Bailin at Koplin Del Rio make terrific neighbors. The artists have nothing in common in terms of methods, materials or imagery, but both are storytellers at heart, using accessible and familiar visual vocabularies toward evocative, metaphoric ends.

Dorman, based in New York, starts with antique contour maps, mechanical and scientific diagrams and illustrations from natural history texts, collages them into new contexts, and paints into, around and over the images. The informational function of the found materials gives way to a rich illogic, in turns pensive and playful. Dorman meanders through time and the visual record of human achievement and observation, improvising pathways and scenarios that, as in the gem "Little Babel," hint at new, resonant myths.

Bailin draws scenes involving a single character in a generic, pared-down office. Each man wears a suit, the uniform of order and authority, but is caught in a moment of quiet desperation, absurd futility or comic disorder. One stands on his desk with fly swatter and staple gun, ready to quash a minute pest. Another, in "Revision," stands in a doorway, hands on hips, watching smoke billow toward him, one inadequate bucket at his feet.

What transpires in this scene is a redefinition of multiple dimensions: the physical environment erases itself, and along with it, the assurance of the known dissolves, becomes provisional. Bailin, based in Little Rock, Ark., draws with such clarity and vigor, in charcoal on paper toned a warm brown with coffee, that these tableaux open out marvelously, like timeless parables, toward greater universality.

Koplin Del Rio, 6031 Washington Blvd., Culver City, (310) 836-9055, through July 21.

www.kopлиндelrio.com