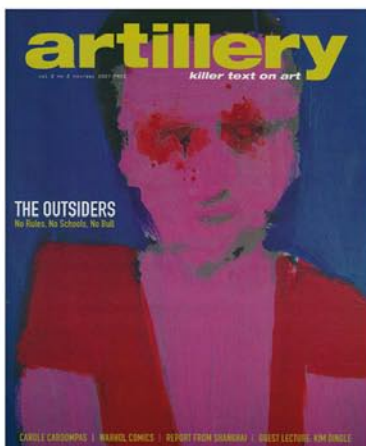


REVIEWS



Artillery
Nov/Dec 2007
Pg. 40

DAVID RATHMAN
Mary Goldman Gallery

I VERY WELL MIGHT BE “too old to understand” considering a recent public admission of turning age 40, but David Rathman seems like the type who would forgive me such an indiscretion. Still, Rathman’s newest exhibition “You’re Too Old To Understand” at the Mary Goldman Gallery is surprisingly mature and wise.

Punctuated by small phrases like “Burnsville Girls Don’t Tell,” Rathman has created a repertoire of images that encapsulate the teenage experience of alienation and discontent. Having said that, it would be very easy for work like this to turn sentimental or hackneyed, but Rathman’s skill is such that his imagery stands as a genuine and vaguely haunting human account of teenage yearning — something we have all experienced in our lives. These images show young people at a concert, a band playing on a stage, and a beat up old ‘66 Mustang (*I’m Holding On For That Teenage Feeling*, 2007) imbued with personality and a deeply personal history. Banged up and strangely vulnerable, the car seems a stand-in for the artist, facing forward, fully present and all of a piece, yet broken. Rathman has painted the Mustang as though it were a portrait of a person begging to be known.

40 Nov/Dec 2007 **artillery**



David Rathman, *Call Rodney*, 2007

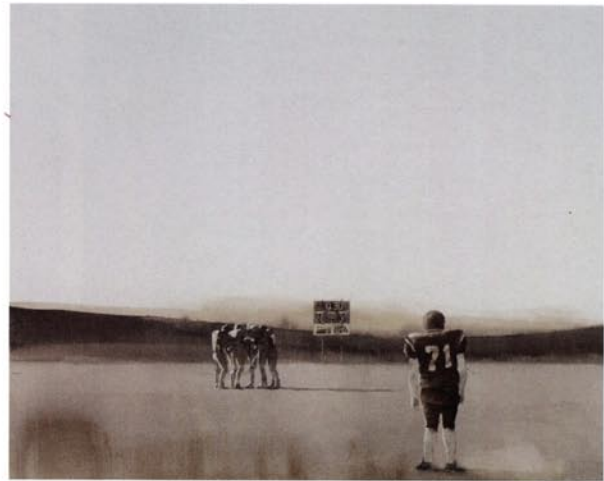
These watercolors are beautifully and sensitively painted, each image a moment poised in time, a haunted, conscripted memory forged in the past, unchangeable. The images are at once personal and universal. *Call Rodney* is an obvious homage to a roadie, for where would any band be without the guy who makes it all happen? Various pedals and recording equipment are lined up on a table as though they had always been there. This image, as with all the others in this show, sidesteps sentimentality, opting instead for a fierce originality and uncompromising vision. The colors are subtle and gradated. These are not nostalgic moments as seen through rose tinted glasses, but very particular memories of a specific time and place evoked through objects, light and space.

Other images are more stylistically painterly. *I’m Not OK*, gives us a firsthand look at a men’s bathroom, the place where “it all happens.” Urinals stand, centurion-like against the walls, yet a strange sense of pathos and alienation suffuses this image. Someone was sick here, and not just physically, but spiritually and psychically. This is an image of loss, sadness and redemption, and Rathman is implying that even in the ugliness that surrounds us, we can find ourselves and grow. The addition of text to these images also heightens their effect. These are small, humble statements that imply deeper meaning than they initially reveal. *Do Yourself A Favor And Never Learn To Cry*, shows these words scrawled at an angle and strangely dangling over the facade of a dilapidated blue barn. Whoever lives there, most defiantly finds themselves weeping.

—Eve Wood



Art Papers
May / June 2007
pg. 65



DAVID RATHMAN
MINNEAPOLIS

At first glance, David Rathman's latest ink and watercolor paintings seem to be little more than flatfooted and somewhat photorealistic images of small-town high school football games. Each of the fifteen works in *Home and Away* [Weinstein Gallery; January 26—March 10, 2007] is painted in the same sepia-toned, wash-heavy palette. Each depicts a similar scene: a small mass of uniformed boys intent on some gridiron task occupy the middleground of wide, low, empty playing fields. The background is mostly treated as a desert-like expanse that hints at the stadium or the hills beyond the battlefield. Ominous masses of dark clouds occupy the big skies overhead, pointing to a looming autumn storm. Beyond this, the paintings provide few other interpretive leads.

Still, several elements do hint at possible greater intentions: the looming storms and heavy skies, the dramatic construction of the scenes, and the oddness of Rathman's painting style, reminiscent of 1960s picture-books for teens. Rudimentary as they are, Rathman lets the background landscape shapes show through the figures in the fore and middle grounds. This endows humans with an almost ghost-like, afterimage quality, as if hinting at the fleetingness of these scenes and the lives they depict. In *Home and Away*, the show's titular painting, a group of ghostlike players huddle tentatively as a lone foreground figure watches them from a distance. Even more tellingly, the scoreboard reveals that there are just thirty seconds left to play.

Perhaps this is nostalgia for a lost time and place, for small towns, boyhood games, the last warm days of Indian summer. Perhaps Rathman is interested in the end of innocence, the passing of simpler and carefree times. As Americans grow weary of the nation's extracurricular affairs in the years since 2001, we too grow more preoccupied, it seems, with lost innocence and simple distractions. Years ago, recognizing that sport is the great diversion for anxious Americans, President Franklin Roosevelt supported the continuation of professional baseball during World War II. So today, even as nearly

four American soldiers and civilians are killed daily in Iraq, the Super Bowl breaks viewership records and *Friday Night Lights*, a television program about small-town high school football, is a minor hit.

Even as we give ourselves over to suburbanized lives, big-box shopping centers, divorces and single-parent hood, depression and mental disorders, and endlessly complex global struggles with no easy solutions, we Americans seem to cling to an idea of ourselves that is rooted in a traditional, kind-hearted, small-town ethos. Rathman's iconic images tap into this longing for simpler contests divorced from any life-and-death import—*three yards to go for a first down, two minutes to go in the game*. This is the reason for their enduring appeal. Despite the looming storms overhead and the ominous fading of the washed out backgrounds into a darkened horizon, and despite the drama of individual scenes—the plays in action, the anxious watchers on the sidelines, the ball sailing toward the uprights in a field goal attempt—Rathman's paintings depict moments that are both replete and without import: boys playing a game. These paintings allow us to forget that greater dilemmas face the nation and these boys—many of whom may become fodder for army recruiters in just a few short months, once the football season is a memory.

—Michael Fallon

ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT: Adrienne Outlaw, view of installation at the Art Museum of the University of Memphis; foreground: *Shelter*, 2000-2006, steel, nails, fabric, and mirror, 7 x 13 x 3 feet; background: *The Hunt*, 2000-2006, fabric, hair, thread, metal, and hide glue, variable dimensions, forms: life-size [courtesy of the artist]; David Rathman, *Home and Away*, 2006, ink and watercolor on canvas, 30 x 38 inches, signed and dated on canvas verso [courtesy of the artist and Weinstein Gallery, Minneapolis]

LOS ANGELES TIMES FRIDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2005

AROUND THE GALLERIES

Getting to the root of sports

Between the crowds, the advertisements, the news cameras, the sideline activity and the scores, stats and icons that fill television screens, sporting events are visually cacophonous affairs.

In an absorbing series of paintings at Mary Goldman Gallery, Minneapolis-based painter **David Rathman** pares all this clutter away to get to the essential drama it tends to obscure.

Two men circle each other in a boxing ring. Bodies pile onto a hockey puck. A rodeo clown taunts a fuming bull. A race car tumbles end to end across a



TAKING A ROUGH RIDE: A race car tumbles out of control in "Finishing School" by David Rathman at Mary Goldman Gallery. Images courtesy Mary Goldman Gallery

track. Each image floats freely in the otherwise blank space of a mid-sized canvas, like a detail cut out of a larger newspaper photo.

Rendered in watercolor and ink — black on white in most cases, white on black in a group devoted to professional wrestling — they're spare, smudgy little drawings, composed in many cases by a mere handful of wonderfully expressive strokes.

Evocative captions and titles underscore the human dimension of these media spectacles.

The triptych depicting the tumbling race car, for instance, Rathman titles "Into Your Arms." The boxing and wrestling images he tags with such phrases as "And I wonder," "Ask Me Why," "Say you believe in me" and "Everyone has a song in their hearts."

In clearing these scenes of visual clutter and eliminating all evidence of the zillion-dollar industry that typically encapsulates them, Rathman cuts to the root of the events: the charged interaction between human bodies.

Mary Goldman Gallery, 932 Chung King Road, Los Angeles, (213) 617-8217, through Jan. 21. Closed Sundays through Tuesdays. www.marygoldman.com



SPORTING THEMES: A detail of "Into Your Arms" shows how Rathman strips away the clutter that makes sports events so cacophonous and focuses on the essential drama of the competition.