

Nathan Abels, “Natural Causes”



“Wildfire”, Acrylic on Panel, 42×60”

The works in “Natural Causes” explore the landscape and its inhabitants with each image depicting a visual pause in an ongoing event. What I am capturing in these paused moments is a sense of “straining at particles of light in the midst of great darkness.” (Keats)

At the extent of the campfire's reach, we glimpse a shadowed form. Then it is gone. What is it that we saw there, at the light's limit? In that instant of vague apprehension, before our mind has had time to interpret the stimulus, we are John Dewey's "live animal," a creature "fully present, all there, in all of its actions: in its wary glances, its sharp sniffings, its abrupt cocking of ears." The "live animal" mode is often awakened by an alarming sight or sound, but it can also be brought on by a rush of emotion or any substantial sensual experience. If we remain attuned, "fully present," our nurtured sense of self may be blurred, even surrendered, and the scrim of conventional, acculturated understanding is ruptured. We recognize that transcendental mysteries and primordial presences are located in ordinary experience, and that our mundane perception of the material world is incomplete. We see the world anew, boundless and beautiful.

Nathan Abels' artwork is concerned with such transformative breakthroughs. Many of his works juxtapose the primeval with the temporal. "Wildfire" pictures the moon, our planet's celestial companion, serene above a raging forest fire, a violent agent of ecological transformation, both destructive and renewing. In "Sullen Roar," the lights of human infrastructure glow like our aforementioned campfire, but the riverside outpost is surrounded by an opaque darkness. Abels reminds us that the hum and pulse of human civilization amounts only to a footnote when considered within a more holistic context. Other works, such as "Passage" or "Half-seeing", picture moments of potential rupture, opportunities for personal transfiguration. In "Passage," a spelunker slides on his back through a narrow section of cave. His headlamp illuminates the low ceiling. The confined space would make even the least claustrophobic among us uncomfortable, and the viewer senses the spelunker's powerlessness. Such an experience, like the wildfire, can be at once annihilative and regenerative. It is a subjugation of the self, a recognition of the infinitesimal reach of our individual vision, yet also an expansion of our vision to include the infinite variety and scope of being.

Abels refers to his paintings and drawings as "visual pauses" in an otherwise "persistent turbulence." To be sure, our contemporary landscape is a turbulent one: industrialized, globalized, and digitized for maximal efficiency and consumption. We are so burdened by stimulation as to be deadened to the underlying reality of each moment and every place. Abels' "visual pauses" are a response to our routine mindlessness; the artist provides the viewer with opportunities to regain focus, to intuit the unfathomable in the worldly. His drawings and paintings are pictures of transitional experiences at the edge of known and unknown.

by Christopher Reiger



“Half-Seeing”, Acrylic on Panel, 34x48”

RULE



"Lost to Sight",
Acrylic Ink on Paper,
22×30"



"Passage", Acrylic on Panel, 24×48"

R U L E



“Kairos”, Acrylic on Panel, 36x48”



"Harbinger", Acrylic on Panel, 11x14"



"Sullen Roar", Acrylic on Panel, 36×48"

RULE



“Murmur”, Charcoal, Graphite and Pastel on Paper, 24x20”



“Portent”, Charcoal, Graphite and Pastel on Paper, 24x20”



“Floating”, Charcoal, Graphite and Pastel on Paper, 24x20”

Curatorial Statement
By Nathan Abels

Each of the works chosen for “Natural Causes” contributes to an overall tone - rooted in what Simone Weil calls the “absence of place”. Many of the artists in the exhibition have obscured or abstracted their images from the natural world; some more directly as seen in Alexander Binder’s photographs of psychedelic forests, Yoshitomo Saito’s casts of natural forms, and the distant landscapes in Jason Stopa’s rear-view mirrors. Others present works whose references to the landscape are less direct; Mindy Bray’s watery abstractions, Eric LoPresti’s aerial landscapes, and Alan Kitchen’s work which is reminiscent of a night sky, a weathered stone or a desert floor. Formally, the pieces that make up “Natural Causes” are softened as though seen through a fog, a dust storm or atmospheric pollutants - they show nature as we experience it, not as it ought to be. There is also a degree of uncertainty or mystery to these works that makes them alluring - as if in a night’s time these scenes will be irrevocably changed.

RULE

Alexander Binder - Photography - Stuttgart, Germany





Installation view from left to right: Alexander Binder, Mindy Bray

RULE

Mindy Bray
Denver, Colorado



"Disperse"
cut felt, 72" x 72"



"Ebb"
gouache on mylar, 18" x 24"



A Curating Role Reversal, Denver Post, February 7, 2010:

“**Mindy Bray, Rule.** Working from photographs of rushing, cascading water, this Denver artist abstracts the imagery to its rawest yet still recognizable essence.

Bray creates simple yet complex compositions of flowing forms and interplays of negative and positive space that she has realized in an assortment of media, including “Disperse,” a wonderfully sculptural, 6-foot-square wall hanging cut from felt.”



Installation view from left to right: Mindy Bray, Jason Stopa, Eric LoPresti

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Jason Stopa
Brooklyn, New York



"Untitled(Poles)",
Oil on Canvas



"Untitled(The Bends)",
Oil on Canvas



#661 Victoria Crater
Oil on linen, 30 x 40," 2009



#647 Unidentified Structure, Fade
Oil on linen, 40 x 30," 2009



#642 Reactor Construction, Fade
Oil on linen, 40 x 30," 2009

RULE

Alan Kitchen
Denver, Colorado



"An explosion settles
into something more
subtle", Charcoal on
Paper, 28" x 23"



"Displacement occurs
from a motivated
force", Charcoal on
Paper, 28" x 23"

RULE

Yoshitomo Saito
Denver, Colorado



“Autumn Nest”
cast bronze
72x18x8”



A Curating Role Reversal, Denver Post, February 7, 2010:

“Yoshitomo Saito, Rule. Nature offers a kind of magical union of precision engineering and organic beauty, and both are richly evident in two superbly crafted works by this nationally known Denver sculptor.”



Installation views -

Above:

Yoshitomo Saito, Eric
LoPresti, Alexander Binder

Below: Mindy Bray,
Yoshitomo Saito



Installation view from left to right: Yoshitomo Saito, Mindy Bray, Jason Stopa, Eric LoPresti, Mindy Bray, Alan Kitchen, Yoshitomo Saito