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Alexis Rockman USA

Life of Pi Drawings

Thursday October 17th, 2013 | time | Drawing Center

The author

Alexis Rockman was born in 1962. He is an American contemporary artist known for his paintings that provide rich depictions of future landscapes as they might exist with impacts of climate change and evolution influenced by genetic engineering. He has exhibited his work in the United States since 1985, including in 2004 an exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum, and internationally since 1989. Alexis Rockman lives in New York City, and works out of a studio in the city's TriBeCa neighborhood. He has been depicting the natural world with virtuosity and wit for more than two decades. He was one of the first contemporary artists to build his career around exploring environmental issues, from evolutionary biology and genetic engineering to deforestation and climate change. Rockman has garnered attention for embracing these issues, as well as for the epic quality of his projects, including several monumentally scaled canvases. His work expresses deep concerns about the world's fragile ecosystems and the tension between nature and culture, which are communicated through vivid, even apocalyptic, imagery. Rockman achieves his vision through a synthesis of fantasy and empirical fact, using sources as varied as natural history, botanical illustrations, museum dioramas, science fiction films, realist art traditions dating back to the Renaissance, and firsthand field study.

www.alexisrockman.net

The author

Alexis Rockman: A Fable for Tomorrow by Joanna Marsh, Kevin Avery, and Thomas Lovejoy (GILES, 2011)

Zoom

Alexis Rockman: Drawings from Life of Pi

The exhibition reflect the evolution of Rockman's role in *Life of Pi*. The first stage includes his annotated *Life of Pi* script, and his larger-scale watercolors, used for presentation purposes to give the studio an idea of Ang Lee's conception. The second stage is comprised of more detailed sketches, particularly landscape elements (fruit, tree branches, pools etc.) of the fantastic floating island that Pi lands on towards the end of his voyage. Here, Rockman's work will be placed in the context of the film's art department, the design and execution of the built sets. The third stage centers on the hallucinatory episode that Rockman helped to design (in collaboration with Lee, the film's editor, associate producer and F/X supervisors), the so-called "Tigervision" sequence, which is one of *Life of Pi*'s purely filmic inspirations, i.e. an element not adapted from Yann Martel's original novel. In this sequence, Pi, following the tiger's gaze over the side of the boat, plunges deep into his own oceanic subconscious, a surreal world of fantastic forms, familiar memories and overwhelming loss. Rockman's watercolor sketches on black paper (the first use of this medium for the artist) formed the basis of the images developed by the well-known, Paris-based F/X company, BUF. Here the sketches will be displayed in tandem with samples of the intermediate stages of animation leading up to the finished product, thereby providing an overview of this unique interaction between a director's vision, an artist's hand and eye, and the full creative-technological arsenal of big-budget filmmaking.

About Alexis Rockman

"ZOO station" by MAYA LAU, *The New York Times*

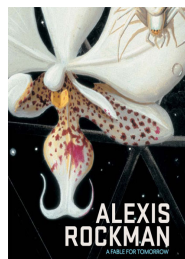
For nearly three decades, Alexis Rockman has been painting what he calls "natural-history psychedelia", dinosaur like descendants of rabbits and roosters; a chimera of an alligator, a pigeon and a rat thrashing in a sewer (or depending on how you look at it, a flooded subway tunnel). In 2009, the director Ang Lee asked Rockman to produce visual inspiration for his movie "Life of Pi" (released Nov. 2012), based on Yann Martel's novel about a boy's spiritual journey adrift at sea in a boat with a tiger. Knowing that the film would rely heavily on digital imaging, the filmmakers wanted a human hand to help visualize some of the "freaky biological fantasies" living in the water where the story takes place.

Rockman's artwork for the film, the product of hundreds of sketches, can be seen above in the form of real and imagined aquatic species. He used gouache on black paper, which he had never done before. The art inspired a scene in the movie called "Tiger Vision," a nonverbal, hallucinatory trip that serves as an apparent mind meld between the protagonist, Pi, and the tiger (Rockman says it's akin to "what 'Star Gate' was to 2001)

Rockman, whose art has appeared at the Brooklyn Museum and the Smithsonian, draws on his childhood fascination with the American Museum of Natural History, where his mother worked. Much of his artwork for "Life of Pi" will be on display at the Drawing Center in SoHo in September 2013.

Alexis Rockman: A Fable for Tomorrow

by Joanna Marsh, Kevin Avery, and Thomas Lovejoy (GILES, 2011)



Alexis Rockman: *A Fable for Tomorrow* is the first major survey of the artist's work and features 47 paintings and works on paper from private and public collections. The title of the exhibition is taken from the opening chapter of Rachel Carson's influential 1962 book *Silent Spring*. In it,

Carson combines two seemingly incompatible literary genres, mythic narrative and factual reportage. Rockman approaches his paintings with a similar intent.

Marsh's essay weaves the themes of Rockman's career and the history of America's environmental movement into a cohesive narrative. Avery considers Rockman's art historical references to 19th-century painting, while Lovejoy offers insights in the marriage of art and science in Rockman's work from the perspective of an expert on biodiversity and climate change