

For immediate release and listing:

Ryan McLennan

The Strain of Inheritance

October 17–November 14, 2009

Opening reception, Gallery II: Saturday, October 17, 6–9 PM

New York, NY. September 29, 2009 -- Joshua Liner Gallery is pleased to present *The Strain of Inheritance*, an exhibition of new mixed-media works on paper by the Richmond, Virginia-based artist Ryan McLennan. This is McLennan's first solo show with the gallery.

McLennan employs acrylic and graphite in this suite of medium-to-large paintings, each one contributing to an austere allegory on the state of the environment. In this jaundiced view of natural "inheritance," the environment is reduced to sparse, worn-out remnants – once-majestic trees are gnarled trunks, overtaken by vestiges of bear-shaped topiary. Animal skulls are lashed to bare branches with these spindly vines, harbingers of doom for the moose and elk that wander through the haunted tableaux.

The fact that we so readily comprehend these intensely allegorical images is evidence of how deeply we fear and identify with the plight of the environment. Like the work of Walton Ford, *The Strain of Inheritance* evinces the competing interests surrounding the use and conservation of natural resources. Though McLennan shares Ford's level of intricacy and beauty, his work contains a broader range of attitudes and critiques.

Work Ethic, for example, depicts several moose lashed by topiary vines to a tree trunk, circling aimlessly. The single moose of *The Storyteller*, with one leg missing and an antler of scavenged bones, gazes stoically at the viewer. Similarly, the ox of *The Widower* appears resigned to the topiary vines creeping down its back, the telltale skull of a dead animal nearby. (The artist has cited portrait photography masters Edward Curtis and Seydou Keita as poignant influences.)

Almost theatrical in their presentation, these images resemble stage settings or photo shoots, as though the animals are playing for sympathy. This gallows humor diffuses the sanctimony of today's conservation rhetoric. Yet beyond references to the environment, McLennan suggests that the roles and work of society are built on little more than narratives of class, myth, and taboo, which turns out to be enough.

Born in 1980, Ryan McLennan received a BFA in Painting and Printmaking from Virginia Commonwealth University. Solo exhibitions of his work include: *Lottery*, Walker Contemporary, Boston (2009); *From Fur to Bone*, Kinsey/Desforges Gallery, Los Angeles (2008); and *New Works*, ADA Gallery, Richmond (2007). Selected group exhibitions include: *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, 31 Grand, New York (2008); *Anonymous III*, Flashpoint Gallery, Washington, DC (2007); and *Repressed-Works on Paper*, Gallery 5, Richmond, VA (2006). He is a recipient of the 2008-09 Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Fellowship and was featured in the 2008 Mid-Atlantic issue of *New American Paintings*.

Joshua Liner Gallery, located in New York City's Chelsea district, presents an exciting roster of young and emerging artists from the West and East coasts, Asia, and Europe.

Also on view, in Gallery I: Kenji Hirata, *The Way Out is the Way In*, October 17–November 14.

For more information, please visit www.joshualinergallery.com, or contact Tim Strazza at 212.244.7415 or tim@joshualinergallery.com.



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1. *Work Ethic* Acrylic and graphite on paper 47 x 54 in. 2009
2. *The Storyteller* Acrylic and graphite on paper 30 x 22 in. 2009
3. *The Widower* Acrylic and graphite on paper 30 x 22 in. 2009