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Nov. 8, 2010

Fact Sheet “Alexis Rockman: A Fable for Tomorrow”

Exhibition

“Alexis Rockman: A Fable for Tomorrow”
Nov. 19 – May 8, 2011

Location

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Eighth and F streets N.W.

Description

Alexis Rockman (b. 1962) 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. His work 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. These concerns 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.

“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 exhibition traces Rockman’s artistic development from the mid-1980s to the present. Highlights include “Evolution” (1992), his first mural-sized painting, and “Manifest Destiny” (2003-2004), an ambitious large-scale work commissioned by the Brooklyn Museum of Art. The exhibition is organized by Joanna Marsh, The James Dicke Curator of Contemporary Art at the Smithsonian American Art Museum. A slide show of selected works included in the exhibition is available online at americanart.si.edu/rockman.

Publication

The exhibition catalog, co-published by the museum and D Giles Ltd., is written by Marsh with contributions from Thomas Lovejoy, biodiversity chair at the H. John Heinz III Center for Science, Economics and the Environment; Kevin J. Avery, senior research scholar at the Metropolitan Museum of Art; and a foreword by Elizabeth Broun, the museum’s director. It is for sale (\$49.95/\$35 softcover) at through the museum’s website and store; it will be available at bookstores nationwide in 2011.

Tour

The exhibition will travel to the Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus, Ohio (Sept. 24, 2011 - Jan. 1, 2012).

Credit

“Alexis Rockman: A Fable for Tomorrow” is organized by the Smithsonian American Art Museum, with generous support from the Cowles Charitable Trust, Kara and Wayne Fingerman, Dorothy Tapper Goldman, Barbara and Jonathan Lee, Nion McEvoy, Pamela K. and William A. Royall Jr., Holly and Nick Ruffin, Betty A. and Lloyd G. Schermer, Sheila Duignan and Mike Wilkins and an anonymous donor.

The Smithsonian American Art Museum, located above the Gallery Place/Chinatown Metrorail station, is open daily from 11:30 a.m. to 7 p.m., except Dec. 25. Admission is free. Smithsonian Information: (202) 633-1000; (202) 633-5285 (TTY). Museum information (recorded): (202) 633-7970. Website: americanart.si.edu.

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