

ARTnews

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reviews: new_york

Josh Dorman

Mary Ryan

This show of collage and map paintings invoked Babel in both name and imagery. Indeed, Bruegel's own painting of the biblical tower appeared, in miniature reproduction, in one of the works. But Dorman's paintings are distinctly of the 21st century. One is not likely to see a more poignant image of environmental crack-up than *Dangerous Intersection* (2008), with its parade of elephants and other animals strung along a highway that doubles as an illustration for two-point perspective.

Dorman organizes his work like a map. With *A Cautionary Tale* (2008), he summons a mountain range, cityscape, and oil refinery from the contours and elevations of a topographical chart.

And while there have been a number of map-based painting shows over the last year—many filled with mainly decorative works—in Dorman's case, the maps make formal sense as settings for his sometimes bewildering cut and pasted imagery.

Sum (2008), a large multipaneled painting and a kind of summation of the show, is an elephant's graveyard of architectural renderings, geometric abstractions, and the freehand drawings, encircled by the artist's inky black line. The surface of *Sum* brought to mind a sidewalk billboard plastered with advertisements and coated in whitewash. In terms of composition, the work skirts chaos. But it has a grandeur of vision, as though Piranesi had discovered Google. Perhaps that's why Dorman paints on maps.



Josh Dorman, *Dangerous Intersection*, 2008, ink, acrylic, antique maps, and paper on panel, 42" x 34".
Mary Ryan.

—Alex Taylor