



Marine Contemporary

009

Ricky Allman
I'll Capitulate if
You Succumb



Essay

Claressinka Anderson

With special thanks to
Leanne Goebel

Ricky Allman's work is a viscerally seductive vision of the contemporary sublime. Utilizing the geographic landscape of his childhood in the Rocky Mountains, modernist architecture and gestural abstraction, Allman's work reflects an indefinite future; a complicated and frenetic world of colliding forms often in the moment of origination. His literal and psychological landscapes are a mix of dreamy futurism and bold expressionism, evoking contradictory worlds of order and chaos, with a sometimes-sinister beauty.

Growing up as a Mormon in Utah, Allman was taught to believe in, fear and prepare for an impending apocalypse. It is no surprise then, that the themes of religious fundamentalism, paired with an implied critique of technology and its pollutive impact on the pressures of modern society are particular concerns for the artist.

Allman's earlier work was more heavily slanted towards doomsday and destruction. "At the time, I didn't want to admit how biographical it was," Allman explains. "I've made sense of a lot of that information and I'm now fascinated with the future and what possibilities there are."

My first encounter with Allman was for a group exhibition I curated called Shut Up and Keep Swimming at JAIL gallery in 2009. The show looked at artists whose work grappled with the psychological fallout from the effects of a dystopian society. It was the first time he had shown in Los Angeles and his painting, *Sister Wives*, attracted a lot of attention. As critic Shana Nys Dambrot explained in a review about Allman's work for *THE* magazine, "Ricky Allman's glorious painting *Sister-Wives* indicted organized religion, specifically Mormonism, and its penchant for perpetuating illusions with soul-crushing fear and guilt. *Sister-Wives* bespeaks a truly bifurcated existence in which a radiant,

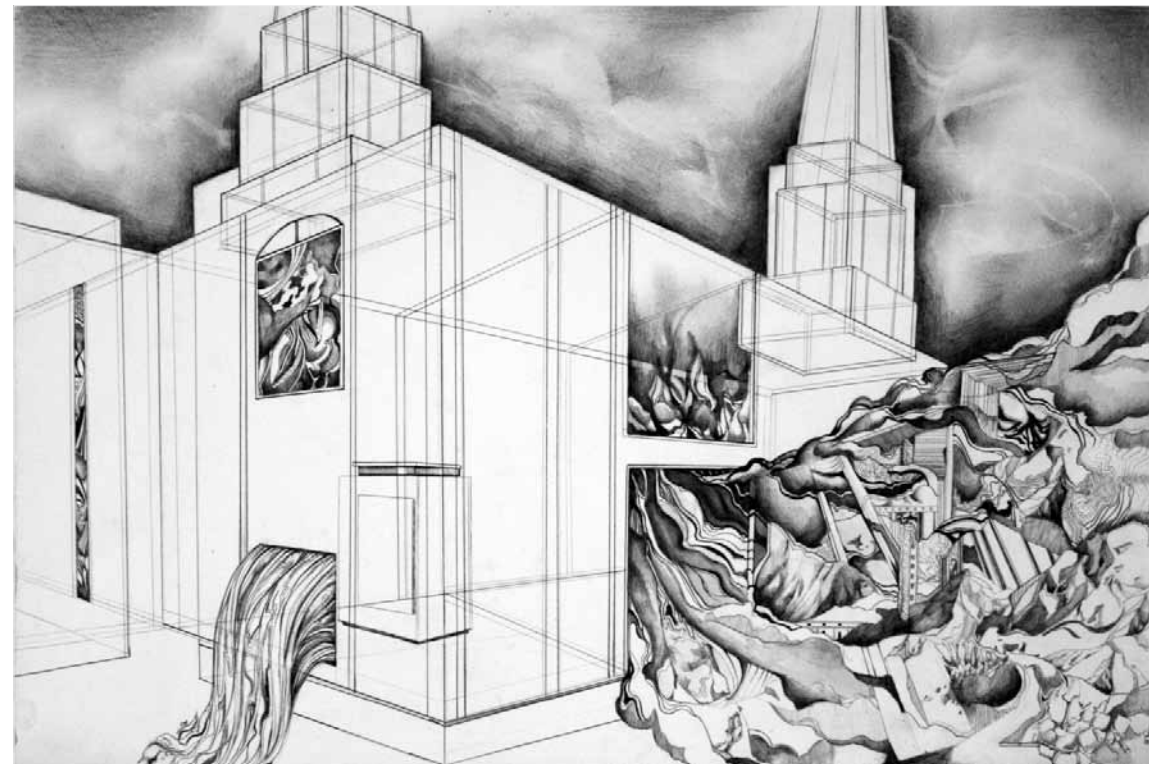
infernal chaos of thick paint and supersaturated color may or may not symbolize the mysteries of the faith, but in any case holds captive some of the richest, boldest abstraction around inside the dimensions of a rigid box."

Allman has purposely moved away from the more overt religious references; the church spires of his earlier paintings and drawings making way for lands that are breaking free of any overriding power structure or hierarchy. Fascinated by the power of the human mind and the merging of science and technology, he now spends his time listening to science podcasts and reading books on technology. While Allman admits there remains a dark side to his painting, he states that ultimately he is an optimist. Whereas before his work was informed by a despondency instilled in him by religion, today he is more optimistic and imagines scenarios of possibility. A maximalist, he puts everything into each work, letting loose any restraints on the level of detail and number of structures he allows in his paintings.

Now living in Kansas City, Missouri, mountains remain an important element for the painter, who considers them protective. They also help him investigate the extreme scale of expansion and building. The mountains allow for a looser, more painterly touch in an otherwise highly structured and meticulously detailed canvas.



Sister Wives
Acrylic, ink on canvas
48" x 60", 2008



Service
Pencil on paper
15" x 22", 2008



Womb Redux
Acrylic on canvas
36" x 36", 2009



Deconcretize
Acrylic on canvas
48" x 36", 2011



Still Here
Acrylic on canvas
48" x 36", 2011

The increasingly fantastical lands of his more recent paintings are reminiscent of the Renaissance paintings of Hieronymous Bosch and Pieter Bruegel. There are hints of satire and comic power, combined with a sprinkling of German expressionistic dystopia as seen in the iconic Fritz Lang film, "Metropolis". The social critique is not as explicit, but this era of architecture, film and painting are obvious influences on Allman's style.

For his first solo show with the gallery, I'll Capitulate if You'll Succumb, Allman's degraded view of society has made way for more hopeful musings on the future of humanity. This new series of paintings and drawings delves further into ideas of human innovation as an evolutionary extension most concerned with self-preservation. Allman believes we are the producer and the product of our tools; we shape them and in turn they shape us.

Allman works on multiple canvases at one time, but each painting starts differently, with merely the spark of a compositional idea. He prefers acrylics, which dry quickly, but there is a lot of prep work necessary, as the canvas gets layered with gesso and gel mediums. Allman conceptualizes the basic structure and architecture of the painting, but then leaves the detail to intuition, filling in and refining. His color palette tends to cycle. In graduate school, he used intense, vibrant colors. Then he took all the color out and did gray and white paintings, using color selectively, "so it could function in a more active way," he said. The paintings gradually got more and more colorful again and he has since pulled back to a more subdued palette with more earth tones, reflecting a wider range of influences from the surroundings of his studio, to European cities he has recently visited. There is a sophistication in his color choices that was not as evident in earlier works, along with a more refined and confident handling of paint.

Allman's paintings also exude a quirky playfulness that doesn't take itself too seriously. Allman explains that while his concerns are very real, he is never one to forget to find the humor in it all: "The relationship of new technologies and their complementary and integral impact on our minds can expand, alter and distort our perception. Much like op-art and psychedelics in the 1960's awoke us to mental activities that we were previously ignorant of, our new tools of perceiving not only our universe but our neural processes have awoken our current generation to a larger, more complex and increasingly more accurate view of reality, bitches!"

Projecting current technology's incremental advances into the future yields far more accurate predictions than any theological prophecies. New self-replicating and repairing building materials hint at a possible future of Darwinian architecture that can evolve over time. Using these notions of architecture as well as landscape imagery and abstraction, Allman plays with physical and psychological spaces that depict unconsidered scenarios. The smaller paintings almost become precious afterthoughts - little snippets and magnified views into these mythical worlds.

There is a sense of awe in these stormy, geometric lands that sweep the viewer up into their chaotic, yet sublime environments. The tension created between the restrained and meticulous architecture and the literally "bursting at the seams", over-spilling explosions, reminds the viewer that we are not in control. Like a one-way train moving rapidly through the night, an Allman painting embodies the urgency of society ploughing forward and never looking back.

Ricky Allman

(b. 1978, Provo, Utah, USA) received his BFA from the Massachusetts College of Art and an MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design. He is an Associate Professor of Painting and Drawing at the University of Missouri-Kansas City and was selected by a national curatorial panel of advisors to receive a Charlotte Street Foundation award and the University of Missouri Research Board Grant 2011.

Select Solo / Two person Exhibition

2012

- I'll Capitulate if You Succumb, Marine Contemporary, Los Angeles, CA

2011

- Surface flaws render light reflections unreliable, David B Smith Gallery, Denver, CO
- Dimensions of Hyper Reality, Gallery B15, Copenhagen, Denmark
- Sturm und Drang vs The Enlightenment, Daniela Da Prato Gallery, Paris, France

2010

- We will never feel the same again, Galerie Anais, Los Angeles, CA
- I had no defense so I lied, David B Smith Gallery, Denver, CO
- This is not going to be enough, Missouri Western State University, St. Joseph, MO
- Birefringence, Minnesota State University, Mankato, MN

Select Group Shows

2013

- Portsmouth Museum of Fine Art, Portsmouth, NH

2012

- Incognito, Santa Monica Museum of Art, Santa Monica, CA
- Tenses of Landscape, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR
- Cheer Up! It's not the end of the World... Edinburgh Art Festival, Scotland
- Space//Form, Breeze Block Gallery, Portland, OR
- Daniela Da Prato Gallery, Paris, France
- Frontier, Paragraph Gallery, Kansas City, MO
- Slick Art Fair, Brussels, Belgium
- Drawing Now Paris, France

2011

- Charlotte Street Visual Artist Awards, Exhibition, Newman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park, KS
- Emblazoned Ciphers, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE
- CALH Music Festival, Wellington, New Zealand
- Habitat, Foothills Art Center, Golden, CO
- Emerge, 101/Exhibit Miami, FL

2010

- Scope Miami (101/Exhibit)
- Salon Marine: Salon No. 7, Works 222 — 247, Santa Monica, CA
- David B Smith Gallery, Denver, CO

2009

- Allen Projects, New York, NY
- Beyond Bounds: Glow, Newman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park, KS
- Salon Marine: Salon No. 1, Works 001-029, Santa Monica, CA
- Desires Chashama, NY, NY
- Signs of the Apocalyps/Rapture Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, IL
- David B. Smith Gallery Denver, CO
- Shut Up and Keep Swimming, Jail Gallery Los Angeles, CA

Select Publications

- Harvard Business Review, Cambridge, MA May 2012
- WhiteHot Magazine 2011
- New American Paintings No. 77 & 89
- Beautiful Decay: Book 1, 2010
- Juxtapoz Magazine April and June 2009
- Review Magazine Oct. 2008 (cover)
- Kurtz, Katie. "Deluge" San Francisco Bay Guardian (Vol. 4 No 36) June 2006.



This is a Lighthouse
Acrylic on canvas
101" x 153", 2012



Pitch
Acrylic on canvas
72" X 123", 2012



To Still
Acrylic on canvas
50"X 71", 2012



Relinquish
Acrylic on canvas
48" X 58", 2012

Over Turn
Acrylic on canvas
48" X 34", 2012



Mediate 2
Acrylic on canvas
6" x 6", 2011





Mediate 3
Acrylic on canvas
6" x 6", 2011



Mediate 4
Acrylic on canvas
6" x 6", 2011



Mediate 8
Acrylic on canvas
6" x 6", 2011



Mediate 9
Acrylic on canvas
6" x 6", 2011

Mediate 11
Acrylic on canvas
6" x 6", 2011



Segment 5
Acrylic on canvas
8" x 8", 2011





Segment 6
Acrylic on canvas
8" x 8", 2011



Segment 7
Acrylic on canvas
8" x 8", 2011



Segment 9
Acrylic on canvas
8" x 8", 2011



Segment 10
Acrylic on canvas
8" x 8", 2011



Segment 13
Acrylic on canvas
8" x 8", 2011



Segment 14
Acrylic on canvas
8" x 8", 2011

Segment 16
Acrylic on canvas
8" x 8", 2011





I'll Capitulate if you Succumb
Installation



Marine Contemporary 009
Ricky Allman:
I'll Capitulate if You Succumb

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