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MODERN PAINTERS

Tall Tales: Kristofer Porter and Christopher Davison

By Paul Laster

Drawing is the name of the game in "Tall Tales," a two-person show of works on paper by Kristofer Porter and Christopher Davison at Fred Torres Collaborations in New York. The two artists, who met at the University of Central Florida in 1997, face off with more than 100 individual drawings between them and dozens of additional works on paper that represent a challenge in which Porter and Davison have repeatedly responded to one another's work over the past several months.

In sheer numbers, Porter dominates the exhibition with 82 drawings from four seemingly different series of works. An art director by day, Porter has only previously shown his work once, which was also at this gallery during a group show about humor in art this past summer. The artist, however, appears to be duly obsessed with making work, evidenced by the fact that all of the pieces on view are from 2010. Stylistically inspired by underground cartoons and editorial illustrations, Porter's drawings depict wandering souls inhabiting nightmarish worlds. His liveliest works in the show make up a salon-style hanging of ink and watercolor pictures that capture amputees, carolers, and monsters sharing surreal moments that address the human condition.

Christopher Davison, meanwhile, is an artist of another ilk. Exhibiting regularly at offbeat and emerging galleries since 2000 — including a solo show at Nicelle Beauchene Gallery on New York's Lower East Side in 2009 — he mixes ink with flashe and gouache on paper to construct psychological studies of dreamy archetypes. Referencing both art history and myths, Davison's drawings offer fragmented men in motion, minotaurs getting philosophy lessons, and processions of nude women. Eloquently drawn, they explore a wide variety of mark-making techniques to marvelous results.

For their joint project in "Tall Tales," Porter and Davison created a visual game, roughly based on the idea of the exquisite corpse. Titled "Call & Response" and complete with its own Web site, the game involved each artist responding to the last person's drawing in a way that was governed by a set of rules. For example, a size limitation of 7.5 x 5.5 inches was instated; the use of materials beyond black ink was limited to one color plus a wild-card medium; the time given to respond was 24 hours; and the time to make the drawing was 30 minutes. Scanned and uploaded to the site, as well as exhibited in a time-line display, the snappy little pieces daringly illustrate ideas from two distinct minds that share a common love for a medium.