



MARK MOORE GALLERY | **DAVID RATHMAN** STATEMENTS

# DAVID RATHMAN

## STATEMENTS

**Mark Moore Gallery: *Statements* introduce a featured gallery artist through images and candid interview. From noteworthy early examples to present bodies, the works featured in *Statements* act as an overview of the varying practices and movements implemented by a given artist in tandem with their thoughts and interpretations.**

David Rathman received his BFA from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MN). He has exhibited at such institutions as Larissa Goldston Gallery (NY), Contemporary Arts Museum (TX), Walker Art Center (MN), Arts Center of St. Petersburg (FL) and Mary Goldman Gallery (CA). His work is featured in fifteen public collections, including the Whitney Museum of American Art (NY), J. Paul Getty Museum (CA) and the Art Institute of Chicago (IL). Rathman's sparsely rendered watercolors appraise the introspective convictions associated with identity, as well as the popular icons and coping mechanisms towards which we inherently gravitate.

Says the artist, "Obviously, there are things I'm dealing with there; there's aggression; it's people being tested, contesting. It almost feels like I'm making pictures of the things that captivated me when I was a boy. I wanted to be an artist from day one, and so I incorporated the stuff I was into when I was eight years old: cars crashing, football players, boxing..." (2010)



*Orange Crush*, 2010. Watercolor on paper, 38.5 x 53 inches

# DAVID RATHMAN

As interviewed by Matthew Gardocki, Assistant Director

**When reading the titles for your work, I feel that I could be reading the lyrics to any number of songs by The Replacements. How heavy a role does music play in your work?**

Music is important; it's usually on in my studio, and it affects my day. Certain types of music encourage different kinds work, and for some time now I've been incorporating snippets of song lyrics within the drawings. I use them as hand written legends, declarations, utterances or as titles to propel the piece. That wonderful range of atmosphere, suggestion and implication found in songs - it can set up a dialogue with the image I'm painting. It's crucial to me to find and employ the right words, as titles or as written text within the pieces. Making reference to my use of words being equally important as hand written texts or as titles. That's what I did with this new work - the titles were carefully considered and weighed, even if I didn't write much into the paintings. It carries the same importance for me. And yes, I'm a huge Replacements fan...my hometown favorites; I saw them many times here in Minneapolis and I continue to spin their music. I listen to lots of different genres: rock, classical, sound effect albums, the barges in the river outside my studio and lots of good 'ole country music. I'm partial to Waylon Jennings, George Jones, and The Jayhawks.

**Unlike artists such as Pei-Ming Yan or Marlene Dumas - who also use elements of watercolor and portraiture derived from found imagery - you have a nearly dreamlike or stream of consciousness style. Can you elaborate on your use of source material?**

Obviously, I'm working from photographs. Like a lot of artists, I pull stuff from the Internet; usually I have something specific in mind to paint, like "interior of movie theatre," then I surf images on Google. Love the Google.



I take about half the source photos myself. High school football games, portraits of demolition derby cars, rodeos, interiors of rooms - I shoot with a very basic point-and-shoot camera. I don't need too much information or clarity. In fact, the lack thereof gives me more to do when trying to bring an image to life with paint on paper. Choice of source photos is both deliberate and random. I look for things that resonate with me and suggest something other than what's obviously there. I am interested in moving the painted image past a photo representation and drifting it into dreamlike otherworldly pastures.

**With works like "Where's the end of it?" or "Orange Crush" you are working in a much larger scale than in previous shows. Did you find this change difficult?**

Not really. I hadn't worked that big before, but it came fast and naturally and without struggle. Plus, I bought some fabulous new big brushes and they were giving me the eye.

**In earlier works, you had a tendency to use muted tones, whereas most of your recent paintings seem more vibrant. Why the change in palette?**

Color...color! Yes, it feels good to crack open a tube of something other than brown. I let it out with this body of work. It was also fun and strange to paint that big gnarly truck with light washes and pastel colors; one of the tires is pulsing with a tie-dyed weirdness. It's like the truck is something alive and hungry.

**Most people would not consider Minneapolis a hotbed of contemporary art activity - how do you feel living there instead of New York or Los Angeles affects your work?**

Actually, it's a very good art town! It's affordable for an artist to live here, have a nice studio and be able to do your work without a lot of stress.

There are three very good museums here as well; the Walker is - by everybody's account - one of the top five contemporary art museums in the country. There's a great theatre scene, some excellent galleries and the music scene has always been exceptional. Plus we have taverns everywhere with names like Grumpy's, Psycho Suzie's, The Bone & Bucket, Randy's...you really can't go wrong when you're thirsty.

**Which current artists do you follow?**

Brad Kahlhammer, Guillermo Kuitca, Michael Borremans and Jockum Nordstrom. I also still look and hard at Matisse, Hopper and Basquiat.

**“My work seems to swirl around boys and men with pronounced testosterone, ambition, hubris, vulnerability and longing.”**

– David Rathman in conversation with Sasha Lee of Beautiful/Decay, 2010

**Why choose predominant themes like bands, demolition derby, cowboys and football players?**

I think it's a bit of projection on my part: to be something else, somewhere else. I assume a new identity and create the pictures from that point of view, self portraiture from somebody else's perspective.

**What brought you to watercolor as a visual medium when dealing with such strong images?**

I absolutely love ink and watercolor; I always have. Watercolor and ink have a mind of their own; as you paint you watch with amazement as the pigment pools, swirls and explodes. You end up with something unexpected and not of your hand. I've had a way with it for quite some



time; it's an acquired skill and now it's even fun and challenging to use those mediums to depict my rough and tumble subjects.

**What are your methods of visualization? How does the process of creating an art object begin?**

Lately, I've been making lists and writing down a description of something I feel compelled to paint. Then I go looking for source imagery or I go out and take some photos. The long ride with the cowboy work stems from my love of westerns and all things cinematic. After awhile, I realized it wasn't necessarily about cowboys; the subjects were just vehicles for an adopted attitude, and there was room for my sideways humor.

**Do you find yourself more attracted to work that is unlike yours, or work that has similarities to yours?**

Both. I like seeing how Walton Ford works with his watercolor compositions, same with Marlene Dumas and Kahlhammer. Although, I like a lot of work that is very unlike my own. I gravitate towards artists and work that is compelling, well executed, and dynamic - the artists keep moving their feet and can surprise both themselves and the viewer.

**Do you feel in this current exhibition there is a "pivotal work" - meaning a piece that opened a door for you, changed your direction or was a major result of a prior evolution?**

A lot of the work in this exhibition feels pivotal to me. I usually lock down on one theme or subject and hammer away at it. Here, I felt I opened up my mind and let the images and paintings find their own definition and meaning. I got my cake and ate it too. My usual suspects are all here: cowboys, trucks, tanks and rock 'n roll imagery, but I put them in different contexts and situations. It was a different way to work conceptually, and I like it.

**Is there a recent exhibition that you have seen that has influenced**

**you? If so, why?**

The Guillermo Kuitca retrospective at the Walker was stunning. I also saw a fantastic drawing show at the Hammer the last time I was in Los Angeles.

**I've heard that all artists reference their childhood experiences within their art in some way, no matter what age they are while creating it. Is this true of your own work?**

Yes, I think that is true in my case. I was a very small boy in a very large family. I had a very rich interior life. Growing up in a very small town in Montana, I was always drawing and fantasizing. Magazine images were intensely profound for me. I devoured Life magazine - a whole world so extraordinary and beyond my experience. My involvement with sports (I was a wrestler and competitive swimmer) was essential to my later efforts to be an artist. The ambition, the effort and the discipline needed to succeed in athletics absolutely carries through my art practice.



left: Puttin Memories Away, 2010. Watercolor on paper, 57 x 41 inches

right: David Rathman



LAUTREC



E. Vuillard



P. BONNARD

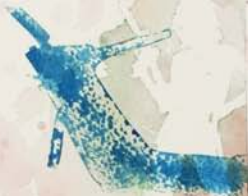


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R. Stevens

Cicerelli





All My Lovelies, 2010. Watercolor on paper, 48 x 39.25 inches. (detail opposite)

**“I find sports and competition compelling subject matter. It’s obvious drama to a spectator, but I’m also interested in interior conflict and testing.”**

– David Rathman in conversation with Bee-Shyuan Chang of the New York Times Magazine, 2010



*On The Other Side*, 2010. Watercolor on paper, 30 x 40 inches



*One More Down*, 2010. Watercolor on paper, 30 x 40 inches



*Untitled, 2011*  
Watercolor on paper  
20 x 26 inches



*Untitled, 2011*  
Watercolor on paper  
20 x 26 inches



*Untitled, 2011*  
Watercolor on paper  
20 x 26 inches



*Untitled, 2011*  
Watercolor on paper  
20 x 26 inches





*Where's the end of it?*, 2010. Diptych watercolor on paper, 42.25 x 138 inches



*Wonderings*, 2010. Watercolor on paper, 30 x 40 inches



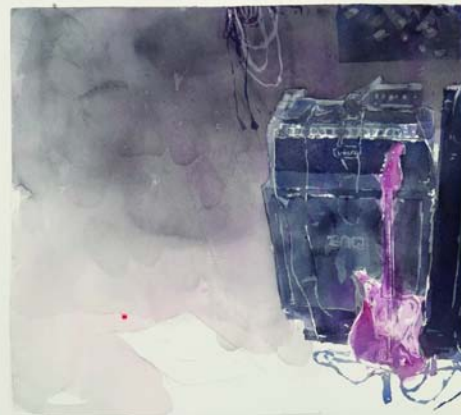
*Drillbit Taylor*, 2010. Watercolor on paper, 30 x 40 inches





*In the Seams*, 2010. Watercolor on paper, 26 x 20 inches (detail opposite)

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*Chord Changes*, 2010. Watercolor on paper, 26 x 20 inches

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left to right:

*Did I Say That in an Overbearing Way?*, 2010  
20 x 26 inches, ink and watercolor on Yupo paper

*Let's Propose A Toast To My Self Control*, 2010  
20 x 26 inches, ink and watercolor on Yupo paper

*Are You Picking Up What I'm Putting Down*, 2010  
20 x 26 inches, ink and watercolor on Yupo paper

*The Day Attacked Me Without Warning*, 2010  
20 x 26 inches, ink and watercolor on Yupo paper

*Lord, There's So Much Hell To Raise*, 2010  
20 x 26 inches, ink and watercolor on Yupo paper

*Living With Linda Used to be Fun*, 2010  
20 x 26 inches, ink and watercolor on Yupo paper

*I've Made Some Gorgeous Mistakes*, 2010  
20 x 26 inches, ink and watercolor on Yupo paper



*The Long Good Friday*, 2009. Watercolor on paper, 15 1/2 x 28 inches



*Adjusting my Claim*, 2009. Watercolor on paper, 17.5 x 17 inches

**“Rathman lets the background landscape shapes show through the figures in the fore and middle grounds. This endows humans with an almost ghost-like, afterimage quality, as if hinting at the fleetingness of these scenes and the lives they depict.”**

– Michael Fallon, *Art Papers*, 2007



*Always That Fear....*, 2002. ink on paper 22 x 25 inches  
Collection Walker Art Center, Minneapolis



*I'm Holding On For That Teenage Feeling*, 2007. Watercolor on paper, 20 x 27 inches. Private Collection



*Untitled*, 2006. Ink and watercolor on canvas, 38 x 30 inches. Private Collection, New York

# BIO

## David Rathman

Born 1958, Choteau, Montana  
Lives and works in Minneapolis, MN

### Education

1982 BFA. Minneapolis College of Art and Design, Minneapolis, MN

### Solo and Two Person Exhibitions

- 2011 *Great Expectations*, Mark Moore Gallery, Culver City, CA  
2009 *Against a Crooked Sky*, Larissa Goldston Gallery, New York, NY  
2007 *You're Too Old To Understand*, Mary Goldman Gallery, Los Angeles, CA  
*Home and Away*, Weinstein Gallery, Minneapolis, MN  
2006 *Somebody's Got To Go*, Clementine Gallery, New York, NY  
2005 *Plumb Swole To A Strut*, Mary Goldman Gallery, Los Angeles, CA  
2004 *I Threw Away the Rose*, Clementine Gallery, New York, NY  
2001 *To Hell With Them Small Towns*, Clementine Gallery, New York, NY  
2000 *Facts and Figures*, Franklin Art Works, Minneapolis, MN  
*New Work: Paintings and Prints*, Jennifer Armetta Fine Art, Chicago, IL  
1996 *Paintings and Prints*, Montgomery Glasoe, Minneapolis, MN

### Group Exhibitions

- 2011 *Box(e)*, Jerome Zodo Contemporary, Milan, Italy  
2010 *Ultrasonic V: It's Only Natural*, Mark Moore Gallery, Santa Monica, CA  
*Group Show*, Larissa Goldston Gallery, New York, NY  
2008 *Every Man's Life is a Fairytale*, Larissa Goldston Gallery, New York, NY  
2007 *The Players*, Arsenal Gallery, New York, NY  
*Paper Trail: A Decade of Acquisitions*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN  
*Vermillion Editions Limited: Prints, Multiples, Artist's Books, 1977-1982*, Minneapolis Center of Arts, Minneapolis, MN

- 2006 *Wild Bunch*, Arts Center of St. Petersburg, St. Petersburg, FL  
*The Searchers*, Whitebox, New York, NY  
2005 *Minets A Polis*, Cohan and Leslie, New York, NY  
*Summer CAMP*, Clementine Gallery, New York, NY  
2004 *Today's Man*, John Connelly Presents, New York, NY  
*The Company We Keep*, Inman Gallery, Houston, TX  
2003 *Clementine @ Hallwalls*, Hallwalls Contemporary Art Center, Buffalo, NY  
2002 *Dialogues: Amy Cutler/David Rathman*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN  
*Drawings 2002*, New Jersey Center for the Visual Arts, Summit, NJ  
*Where the Boys Are*, Clementine Gallery, New York, NY  
*13 Minnesota Artists*, Minnetonka Center for the Arts, Wayzata, MN  
*The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*, Galerie Weiland, Berlin, Germany  
*New Visions of the West*, Nassau County Museum of Art, Roslyn Harbor, NY  
2001 *Works on Paper*, Finesilver Gallery, San Antonio, TX  
*New Work: MCAD/McKnight Artists*, Minneapolis College of Art and Design, MN  
*Minnesota Art with a Twist*, Weisman Art Gallery, University of Minnesota, MN  
*Mixed Greens at Space 101*, Brooklyn, NY  
2000 *State of the Art: Recent Acquisitions*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN  
1999 *The Brown Whiskey Club*, Montgomery Glasoe Fine Arts, Minneapolis, MN  
1994 *Six McKnight Artists*, Minneapolis College of Art and Design, Minneapolis, MN  
1993 *Contemporary Classics: The Illustrated Book Redefined*, Minnesota Center for the Book, Minneapolis, MN  
1992 *Vermillion Editions 15th Anniversary Exhibition*, The Minneapolis College of Art and Design, Minneapolis, MN

- 1990 *New Artists' Books*, Granary Books Gallery, New York, NY  
1989 *Five Jerome Artists*, Minneapolis College of Art and Design,  
Minneapolis, MN

### Awards

- 2000 McKnight Foundation Fellowship  
Minnesota Book Award, Center for the Book  
1993 McKnight Foundation Fellowship  
1992 Bush Foundation Visual Arts Fellowship  
1989 Jerome Foundation Fellowship  
1986 Jerome Book Arts Fellowship

### Public Collections

- Walker Art Center, MN  
The Whitney Museum, NY  
J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA  
New Museum of Contemporary Art, NY  
The Art Institute of Chicago, IL  
Boston Public Library, MA  
Minneapolis Institute of Arts, MN  
New York Public Library, NY  
Stanford University, CA  
Toledo Museum of Art, OH  
Yale University Library, CT  
Plains Art Museum, ND  
Phoenix Public Library, AZ  
University of Southern California, CA  
The Altoids Curiously Strong Collection, NY

**right:** *The Evening Rig*, 2010. Watercolor on paper, 40 x 30 inches

**front cover:** *All My Lovelies*, 2010 (detail)

**back cover:** *Chord Changes*, 2010 (detail)



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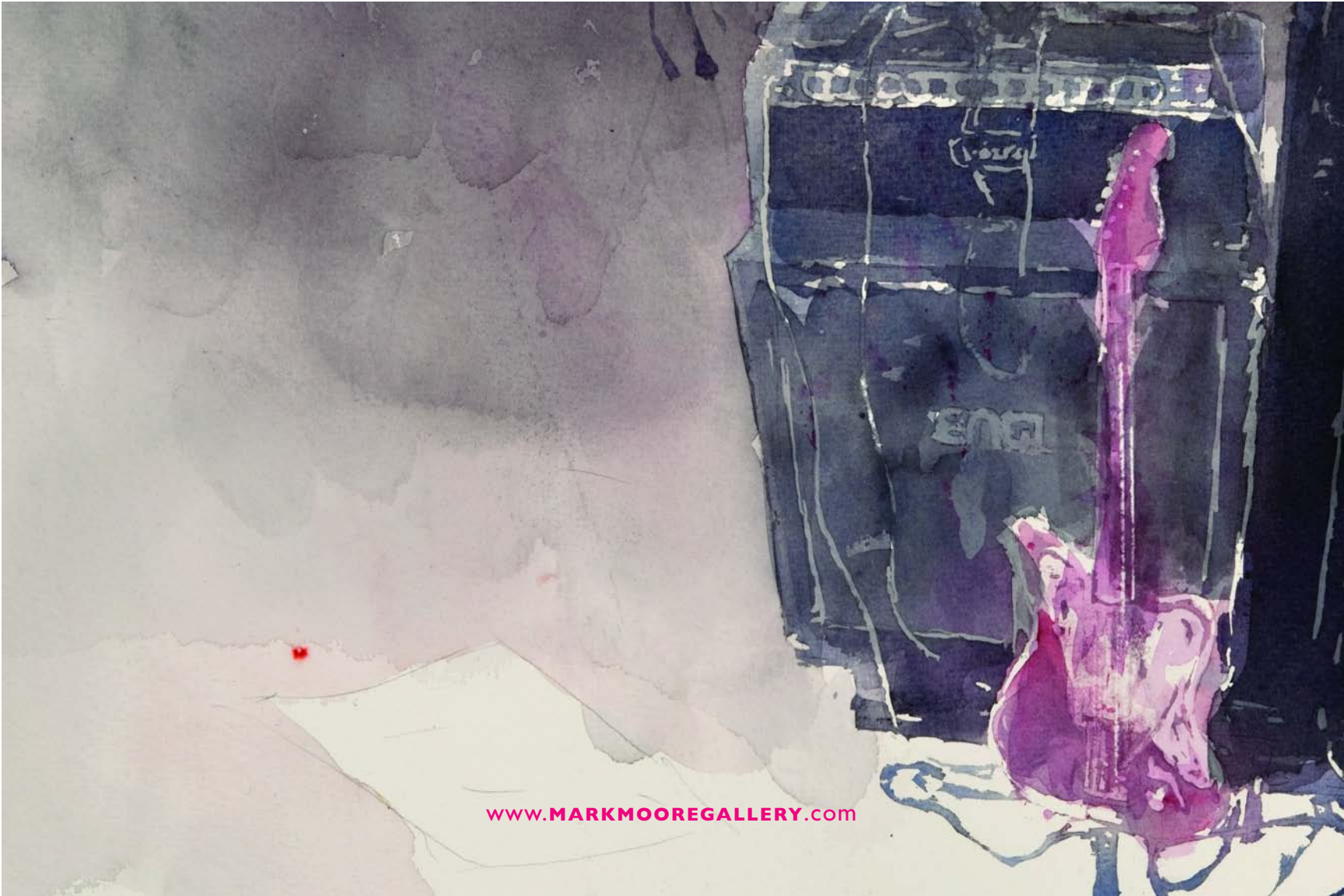
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*You're back in the front yard again, 2007.* Ink and watercolor on canvas, 40 x 48 inches.  
Private Collection, Minneapolis.



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