

★ Reviews ➔ Nicolas Touron

NICOLAS TOURON

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Stux Gallery · New York, NY

With their intense amount of detail and the artist's superb draftsmanship, Nicolas Touron's paintings relate to the work of European graphic artists such as Dutch cartoonist and graphic designer Joost Swarte, introduced to a U.S. audience in the pages of the influential magazine RAW, edited by Art Spiegelman and Françoise Mouly, as well as the dreamlike worlds of American cartoonist and animator Winsor McCay, creator of the comic strip Little Nemo in Slumberland. To achieve this graphic effect, Touron draws black outlines with pen and then fills them in with paint markers, a laborious and precise process that leaves little room for error or uncertainty.

The large vertical landscape *Once Upon A Time*, 2012, draws the viewer in with its pastel colors and oversaturation of activity. Floating logs, potted plants, and ships compete with Rubik's cubes, planes, and giant squids in a nebulous environment whose center is an untouched patch of land. Small creatures in green robes that resemble penguins guide a pack of headless yellow animals to an uncertain task. A huge yellow vortex in the



Boat On The Hudson, 2012, 23" x 40", Oil paint marker, pen on wood
COURTESY STUX GALLERY

background looks like it has the potential to suck everything inside, with the elements on the violet-colored landmass teetering on the edge of this void. *Boat on the Hudson*, 2012, presents a similar scenario, with many of the same elements about to be swallowed up in a pinkish sinkhole. Both paintings indicate a parallel with the world's current fragile economic state. The smaller *People*, 2012, also exudes mixed messages, despite its bright hues. Pink beings occupying a confining room with a checkered tile floor lay at various stages of rest, and while it's unclear if the inhabitants are wearing a pink uniform or if that's their skin color, there is a futuristic socialism evident in the work that belies its childlike charm.

Touron's works on paper, such as *China*, 2013, have a sculptural quality, since the pieces of paper are cut out and assembled together with their edges retaining the shape of the object. Despite their more playful appearance, the artist's attention to detail and craft are undeniable, and the small scenes follow narratives in step with the larger pieces. A sign with the words "WTO WTO WTO" makes it clear there is a questioning of China's hegemony and how they are able to benefit from cheap labor and an open market system eager for low-priced goods. The meaning of the ceramic sculpture *Deer in the Woods*, 2012, is more opaque, with a small group of deer legs lying on top of a crisscrossed stack of pink logs. In some respects, this uncertainty is welcome after the overload of visuals in Touron's paintings. Although the contrast between the unrealistic coloration of the logs and the visual of dead deer being turned into an offering or ritualistic object gives one pause, it is in fact not that different from the world's current state of affairs, with news of death and confusion alternating with candy-coated entertainment to feed the masses.

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