


Television

A former *Democrat-Gazette* editorial writer pops up on PBS. • Page 5E.

Style

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Arkansas artist is bigger draw in California with smaller works

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ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

WEST HOLLYWOOD, CALIF. — The stark beauty that distinguishes drawings by David Bailin of Little Rock is earning him a starring role on the walls of Koplin Del Rio Gallery in West Hollywood.

The gallery focuses on representational figurative, landscape and still-life works created primarily by California artists, Bailin says. This is his second exhibition there; the first was in November 2002.

"They got interested when, on the recommendation of Townsend Wolfe, I sent [gallery director]

Eleana Del Rio a catalog from my 2000 [Arkansas] Arts Center show," he says. "She contacted me soon after, but I wasn't interested in their gallery since I wasn't willing to commit to creating small works; I was working on 8-foot-by-12-to-15-foot drawings at the time.

"This response, in hindsight, still sends chills down my spine for its pure arrogance," he says.

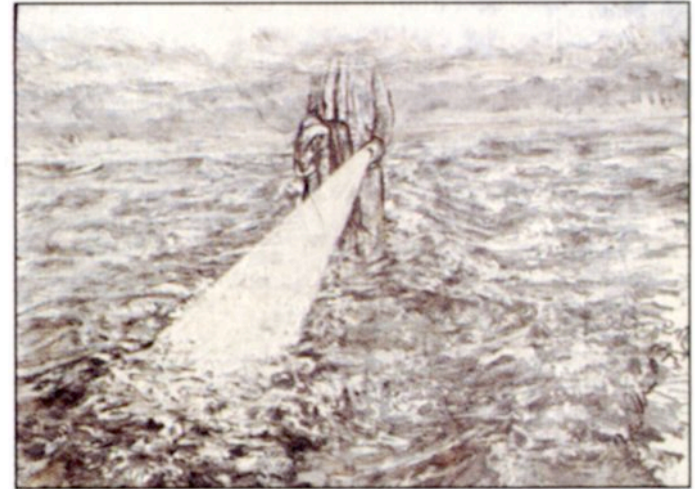
Luckily, he continues, "in 2001 Ms. Del Rio came to the Arts Center on business, and she asked if Townsend could arrange for her to meet with me. That meeting resulted in my participation in a group show [in California] in June

2002 and then a one-person show in November 2002."

His presence in the group show and the one-person show was predicated upon reducing his drawing size. "We fell in love with his stuff and told him if he ever decided to work smaller to let us know," Del Rio says.

"I spent the intervening time trying to rethink my work," he says. "Losing my basement studio, with nearly a half a city square block of space, in the Woman's City Club and moving into my two-car garage encouraged the change in scale.

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It took me six months to find the technique."

Del Rio's interest in exhibiting smaller pieces is based on practicality. "The logistics of shipping big pieces back and forth and of showing them can be difficult," she says, waving her hand toward Bailin's downsized drawings, hanging in an otherwise naked space within her small concrete-floored gallery in this stylish neighborhood of galleries, restaurants, and kitchen renovation and home decorating stores.

The selection of work in this exhibition was made by Del Rio, Bailin says. "She knows the market and the eye out there. I trust her implicitly."

Most of the 12 charcoal-on-paper drawings are 26 by 30 inches in size. They reveal gaunt scenes of blasted landscapes with bony trees, many with solitary figures noodling about in pursuit of private quests. The majority of the drawings were created in 2003 and 2004; one large piece (72-by-84 inches), titled *Schooner*, is from 2000. Prices begin at \$2,000.

Bailin describes his drawings as "a cross between Keaton and Kafka. My characters are almost always a Buster Keaton character living a Kafka short story. Stoic, even heroic at times, but absurd and, from the reader/viewer's standpoint, humorous just the same. If there is a difference between my earlier work and this new work it is that after taking myself so seriously for so long in my work, turning 50 this year has given me a sense of humor."

Of Bailin's November 2002 show at the gallery (which was a near sellout), critic Leah Ollman wrote in the *Los Angeles Times*: "Bailin draws scenes that read like parables. In each, one person is shown, generally a middle-aged everyman, somehow reckoning with his place in the world. He is usually overdressed (in coat and tie) but seemingly under-equipped, for the challenges he faces are daunting."

So far this year, Bailin says, "I have been included in a curated show in Chicago, shown in San Francisco and again in

Chicago at the Navy Pier show. My drawing *Narcissus* was reproduced as a half-page reproduction in the June issue of *Harpers Magazine*." Later this year, he adds, he'll be showing at Hendrix College in Conway.

The Koplin Del Rio show, which opened June 5, continues through July 17. To learn more about Bailin's work, visit www.bailinstudio.com.

David Bailin's *Fog* is part of a new show at Los Angeles' Koplin Del Rio Gallery.