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The Drawing Issue

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exhibition reviews

Jon Rappleye: Supernature at Jeff Bailey Gallery

For his first New York solo show, Jon Rappleye exhibited acrylic drawings of otherworldly landscapes, in which once desolate tree trunks and volcanoes have been reanimated with exotic flora, owls, birds, and other creatures. These distinct features are rendered in heavy black outlines, evoking woodcut or linoleum prints, but also recalling Western American cartoons and Japanese *anime*. They stand in stark contrast to their near-monochromatic backgrounds, which, ranging from blue and green-gray to ochre, envelop them in a mythical atmosphere. Though Rappleye mostly uses traditional brushes, he also sprays pigment directly onto the paper in order to create radiant spheres and smoke-like effects, as in *Where Grows the Vine in a Woodland Waste* (2005), for example.

As if sprung from a Brothers Grimm tale, *Enchanted Wood* (2005) depicts two owls—among the most frequently used of Rappleye's symbolic characters—gracefully towering over a group of trees. The owls, whose eyes have been replaced with star-shaped voids, appear to gaze knowingly into infinity. Be it as fortunetellers or divine guards of the woods, they seem to behold the utopian ideal underlying all of Rappleye's compositions: that in these dreamlike worlds, peaceful coexistence is possible.

—Stephanie Buhmann



John Rappleye, *It's Tiger Elegance Chewing Clover to the Bone*, acrylic on paper (45 x 38 in.), 2005. Courtesy the artist and Jeff Bailey Gallery, New York