



JEFF BAILEY GALLERY

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BORDERCROSSINGS

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BORDER views

Quivers, Tangles and Other Enchantments

When he was a child on his parent's farm in Utah, **Jon Rappleye** made sculptures out of rocks. "I remember painting them to look like owls and for the beaks I would take the thorns off of roses. But the owl has been a recurring motif from culture to culture, and he's a central figure for me, as well. In my work, he's often depicted with a ring of stars above his head, which are symbolic of the unknown or the unseen." From his roost in Jersey City, Rappleye has concentrated on amplifying this mysterious



world, one that is described in *A Marvelous Work of Wonder*. He is as likely to borrow feathers from J.J. Audubon as faeries from Richard Dadd, since both revel in an "over the top quality, stuffing in as much information as possible." In the world according to Jon Rappleye, nothing succeeds like excess. "I've always liked artists who are

outside the lexicon of art history, who don't quite fit in. I guess some of them – like the Pre-Raphaelites and the Symbolists – might be considered schmaltzy and heavy-handed." He has equal regard for artists like Breugel and Bosch, with "their strange, odd attention to detail." Much of what he admires in this work is its resistance to interpretation. "I like that fact that you can't totally decipher everything."

While creating a narrative has never been Rappleye's intention, he has found himself making pieces in which a story is inescapably being told. "It has come down to this idea where the world has somehow come to an end and the only thing left is a computer technology. In trying to render this world, it's not exactly sure what it's doing, so it makes mistakes. In a sense, I guess I would be the computer."



top right:
Jon Rappleye, *Warble Over Thessalian Hills*, 2005, acrylic on paper, 30" x 22". All photographs courtesy of Jeff Bailey Gallery, New York and Jon Rappleye

middle:
Jon Rappleye, *Our Old Feuilleage That Shadow My Likeness*, 2005, acrylic on paper, 30" x 22"

bottom left:
Jon Rappleye, *Enchanted Wood*, 2005, acrylic on paper, 45" x 47"

The narrative has taken on an evolutionary frame in which the botched technology creates a dangerous situation for flora and fauna alike; in this version of the story, tree trunks assume a slightly grotesque anthropomorphism (*Wherein Creature Both Great and Small Dwell*, 2005) and animals become jumbled hybrids (*Beast of Fowl*, 2005). If pushed far enough, the take could turn apocalyptic and the natural world, overflowing with comfortless creatures, would become unsustainable.

Rappleye's visual universe is a space more concerned with imagination and invention than with measurement and theory, and, while he is not anti-scientific, he is wary of the burden of provable fact. "Due to science right now, we feel that we have to pinpoint and answer everything. I just think it's nice to have some mystery, some faerie tales, some mythology."

