

Jack Balas

Tattoo Detour



JFR (#499), 20" x 16", oil on canvas, 2010

November 20 – December 24, 2010
Reception: Saturday, November 20, 6 – 9 pm

L2kontemporary is pleased to announce the first solo exhibition at the gallery by Denver based artist Jack Balas. Mr. Balas has exhibited extensively across the country, including shows this year in Denver, Philadelphia and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Tucson.

”The current paintings and drawings sometimes put aside seamless spaces in favor of multiple and disjunctive ones. At the same time there is a continued interest in mapmaking and the idea of the document. Since 2002 I have been numbering the pieces sequentially and sometimes stamp them with the dates I worked on them -- perhaps in an attempt to keep track of time, but also, perhaps, to consider that experience is cumulative and overlapping, embellished over the course of days and enriched by simultaneous, if discordant, ideas. The works are annotated with words or images that, when compiled into a book or exhibition or globe, suggest reading from left to right, right to left, upside-down or inside-out. My goal is to make images that are memorable not only via their stylistic variety, in a sense creating flags that signal a kind of symbolic territory, but also to offer you a kind of map where it is your responsibility to build bridges across the middle ground between images and ideas. The beauty, hopefully, of interpreting such a construct, then, is that while I might think I may have layed out a map in front of you, I cannot guess where you might choose to go, or even which route you might take.

“So the guys in the paintings? Well, I am scratching them below the surface and putting them to work. And they are no strangers to it (the work, that is) given the many gyms I find them in. Often for the sake of sports, but just as often for the sake of picking up girls, they work out knowing the power of beauty. But I see them too as eminently malleable, waiting for instructions, stem cells in a way and eager to please. They are everyman and my muse, off and doing guy things in the paintings, political things, religious things, introspective things and full of stories and philosophy, and all the while not giving a crap that the world, let alone the art world, views them as suspect because of their beauty (in the same way that beautiful paintings, or even all paintings, are often viewed as suspect these days in some precincts of the art world.) I put them out there too toying with the prejudice many in the world have felt for centuries in favor of female beauty, still ubiquitous on all fronts in our daily lives. Almost always metaphoric in nature, I hope the images here are a far cry from those found in run-of-the-mill coffee-table books of hot guys lying oiled and naked among tattered factories and skeins of rope. As fun as that might be, I want my guys instead to go beyond objects of desire, to straddle the brawn vs. brains divide and do some heavy mental lifting at the same time that they muscle up. But I put them out there as a *fait accompli*, denizens of a post-gay world who take everyone's gaze in stride, male or female, straight or otherwise, going about their business as testimony of a world that has changed and whose change, by being themselves, they have helped to bring about. Ultimately, thus, the work is political. It addresses that big question of what kind of world do you want to live in? I prefer one that is open and honest, where we can all live up to our potential. And if there's work to be done, we, and hopefully these guys, are up to the job. Better yet, since I do think of them as everyman, they are, simultaneously, already part of us.”

Jack Balas