

ROBERTS & TILTON

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 16, 2016

Michael Dopp
Capriccio
January 14 - February 18, 2017
Opening Reception: January 14th, 6-8pm

...we contemplate the ravages of time, and in our imagination we scatter the rubble of the very buildings in which we live over the ground; in that moment solitude and silence prevail around us, we are the sole survivors of an entire nation that is no more. Such is the first tenet of the poetics of ruins.— Denis Diderot, "The Salon of 1767"

Historically, depictions of architectural ruins follow a tradition that fastens the viewer's time and place to the landscape of a bygone era. This linkage proposes an unbroken lineage between where we stand today and the time in which our predecessors constructed their soaring arcades and classical epistyles. Precarity is fundamental to ruin imagery and often achieved through a combination of crumbling balustrades against sublime skies, perhaps the winged Goddess Futura, harbinger of the changing winds of fate and fortune, or the unfortunate Icarus falling to his death. The combination of nature's glory with the strident ways of the gods and the frailty of human construction is a pointed reminder of our own impermanence.



Michael Dopp: *Capriccio*, 2016
Ink on paper, 13 x 9 in (33.0 x 22.9 cm)

In Michael Dopp's new ink drawings, he describes his ruins through the hazy lens of a cocktail, the confinement of terrariums, the warped light of a fish bowl, a looking glass gaze. They are visual meanderings between optical events and solid forms, making use of the ink's materiality as a watery, filmy substance. This collection of drawings asks what is reliable? Is there anything immune to distortion?

Unlike traditional ruin imagery, Dopp jettisons the sublime for something playful, kitschy, and surreal. He seems to accept that the ruin, after six insistent centuries, has been flattened to pastiche. The drawings veer toward the illustrative; a cartoon quality conjures the entirety of the genre in a way that borders on satire. In our current landscape of instability and uncertainty, these drawings express a longing for the days when the capriccio was a landscape of "what-ifs" and dreamy nostalgia. After all, the devastation had come and gone and what we are left with is a harmless, domesticated relic of ravages past.

The paintings of Hubert Robert (1733-1808) come to mind. His flavor of ruins summons fiery, sublime, urban destruction on a large scale, often chronicling the demise of Paris's iconic structures. Robert's fixation on his city's structural defacement ultimately proved to be prescient. On the eve of the French Revolution, France was financially destitute despite the opulence of its elite. It was a time of tremendous class division, combined with the rise of Bank Credit and promissory notes (read bundled toxic assets and lives lead on credit) and depletion from years of funding a war effort. Sound familiar?

Dopp's use of refraction implies a ripple-transition effect. A watery, cinematic feature often used for dream sequences or visions, which orient the drawings as more oracular--in the vein of Robert--rather than your typical, imperial, romanticized ruin with an eye on the past. If it is, as Dopp insists, that we find ruin in our cups, then one must hope he will find our future there as well. Presumably his tealeaves will resemble cocktail straws and swizzle sticks. - Abbey Shaine Dubin

For additional information, please contact Camille Weiner: 323.549.0223 and camille@robertsandtilton.com
Gallery hours are Tuesday - Saturday, 11:00am - 6:00pm.
Roberts & Tilton is located between Fairfax Avenue and La Cienega Boulevard.
Parking is available on the street and at Dunn Edwards located 1/2 block east of the gallery.