

Painting itself is a messy proposition. There's liquid and spillage, unpleasant smells, waiting for things to dry, and of course—accidents and mistakes. In Alexander Ross's work I see the work my father labored over for years—micro-biology. I recall as a youth my father bringing home beautiful wooden boxes filled with glass rectangles lined up neatly in velour. On the glass was a tiny speck—Horton Hears a Who?—which was invisible until he put it under the electron microscope. Looking into the glass revealed an enormously messy world. The world was amorphous, yet structured. The world of the cell was enveloping. Ross takes us there—but Ross's world is au courant. Ross has constructed a world belonging to our time of iPods and Macs. It is very cool—detached—no mess. On the iPod planet, his world could be described as trance or trip.

I am thrilled that the Contemporary is presenting a survey of work by Alexander Ross. I was fortunate enough to present Ross's work in a group show in 2001 and I feel even more privileged that the Contemporary is providing him with his first solo museum exhibition. Ross's show reaffirms the Contemporary's commitment to fostering innovative and critically significant contemporary art. The show also proves the Contemporary's ongoing dedication to supporting living artists and recognizing their talent during their lifetime. My heartfelt thanks go out to the all lenders of the exhibition and also to the entire staff of the Contemporary. I want to especially thank Andrea Green, who as co-curator, actually completed all the "heavy" lifting for the exhibition. I also want to thank Hudson at Feature Inc., New York, who provided enormous support in helping to organize the show. My biggest thanks go out to Alexander Ross for creating his world on canvas and paper so that we may present it to the St. Louis audience. Lastly, I want to thank Susan Jennings and the newest edition to the Ross family, Faye, for their participation and support.

Paul Ha  
Director



Untitled, 1998, oil paint on canvas, 64 x 62 inches. Collection of Donald L. Bryant, Jr. Family Trust, St. Louis, Missouri. Courtesy of Feature Inc., New York.

Born 1960 in Denver, Colorado, Alexander Ross currently lives and works in Alford, Massachusetts, and New York City. He has had recent solo exhibitions at Kevin Bruk Gallery, Miami, FL; Feature Inc., New York, NY; Daniel Weinberg Gallery, Los Angeles, CA; and Mary Boone Gallery, New York, NY. His selected group exhibitions include Disparities and Deformations: Our Grotesque, Site Santa Fe Fifth International Biennial, Santa Fe, New Mexico; Endless Love, DC Moore Gallery, New York, NY; Giverny, Salon 94, New York, NY; Plotting, Carrie Secrist Gallery, Chicago, IL; Art Contemporaneo International, Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City, Mexico; Synth, White Columns, New York, NY; Greater New York, PS1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City, NY; Drawing, Stephen Friedman Gallery, London, UK; Mixed Bag, Schmidt Contemporary Art, St. Louis, MO; and Art on Paper, Weatherspoon Art Gallery, University of North Carolina, Greensboro, NC. Alexander Ross has received fellowships from The John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship, The Tesuque Foundation, and completed a residency at Artists at Giverny Program, Giverny, France.

Funding for the exhibition has been generously provided by the Whitaker Foundation, Regional Arts Commission, Arts & Education Council, and Friends of the Museum, with in-kind support from the Chase Park Plaza Hotel.

Exhibition checklist:

Untitled, 2004, watercolor, flashe, graphite on paper, 18.25 x 15 inches.  
Courtesy of the artist and Feature Inc., New York.

Untitled, 2000, color photograph, graphite, colored pencil on paper, 18 x 15 inches.  
Courtesy of the artist and Feature Inc., New York.

Untitled, 1998, oil paint on canvas, 64 x 62 inches.  
Collection of Donald L. Bryant, Jr. Family Trust, St. Louis, Missouri.

Untitled, 2001, oil paint on canvas, 56 x 70.5 inches.  
Collection of Jeffrey Peabody, New York.

Untitled, 2002, graphite, acrylic paint on paper, 20 x 18 inches.  
Private Collection, New York.

Untitled, 2003, graphite, flashe, colored pencil, ink on paper, 30.25 x 43.75 inches.  
Private Collection, New York.

Untitled, 2000, color photograph, graphite, colored pencil on paper; 18 x 15 inches.  
Private Collection, New York.

Untitled, 2001, oil paint on canvas, 50 x 54.5 inches.  
Collection of Doreen Remen and Steven M. Weiner, New York.

Untitled, 1998, oil paint on canvas, 54 x 64 inches.  
Collection of Helene and James Rosenthal, New York.

Untitled, 2002, oil paint on canvas, 84 x 65 inches.  
Collection of Barrie Schwartz and Patrick Hayne, New York.

Untitled, 1997, oil paint on canvas, 54 x 46 inches.  
Collection of Yvonne and Leo Villareal, New York.

Untitled, 2003, graphite on paper, 30 x 22.5 inches.  
Collection of Leopoldo Villareal, Cuernavaca, Mexico.

Untitled, 2003, ink, flashe, colored pencil, graphite on paper, 25 x 22.25 inches.  
Collection of Leopoldo Villareal, Cuernavaca, Mexico.



CONTEMPORARYARTMUSEUMSTLOUIS

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# ALEXANDER ROSS: SURVEY

March 18 - June 12, 2005

CONTEMPORARYARTMUSEUMSTLOUIS



Untitled, 2004, watercolor, flashe, graphite on paper, 18.25 x 15 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Feature Inc., New York.

### Natural Artifice

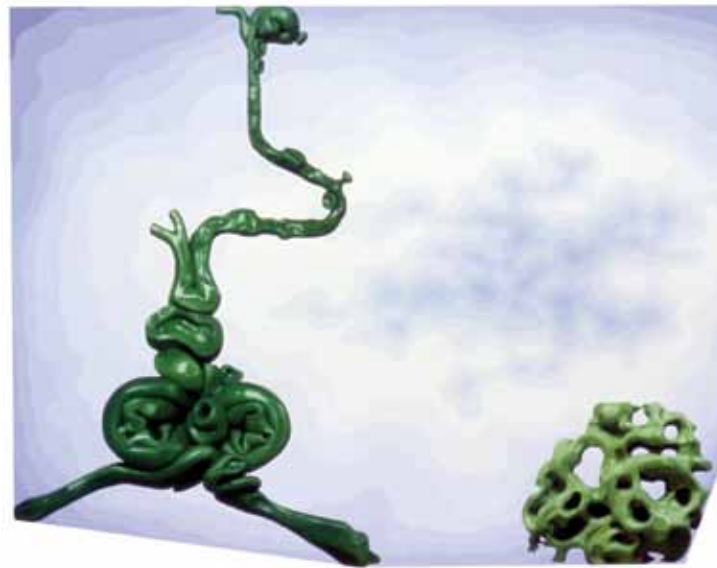
For his first solo museum exhibition, Massachusetts and New York-based artist Alexander Ross presents paintings and drawings that play with scale, biomorphic forms, and the synthesis of abstraction and representation. As exemplified in the current survey of paintings and drawings dating from the past eight years, Ross's works are layered with multiple references to organic and biological forms, science and nature, and linger simultaneously between life and artifice.

Ross's process begins with his creation of plasticine models that suggest cellular structures, plants, scientific specimens, and landscapes. These hand-sculpted forms are essentially "blobs" of clay with crevasses and protrusions that have been shaped into various morphing forms and convey a variety of associations while at the same time remain abstract. Ross photographs the finished forms and then paints and draws from the photographs, which have been cropped and edited, thus further removing the models from their original state. Ross transcends his interpretations of the models from their three-dimensional form to two-dimensional representations on canvas and paper.

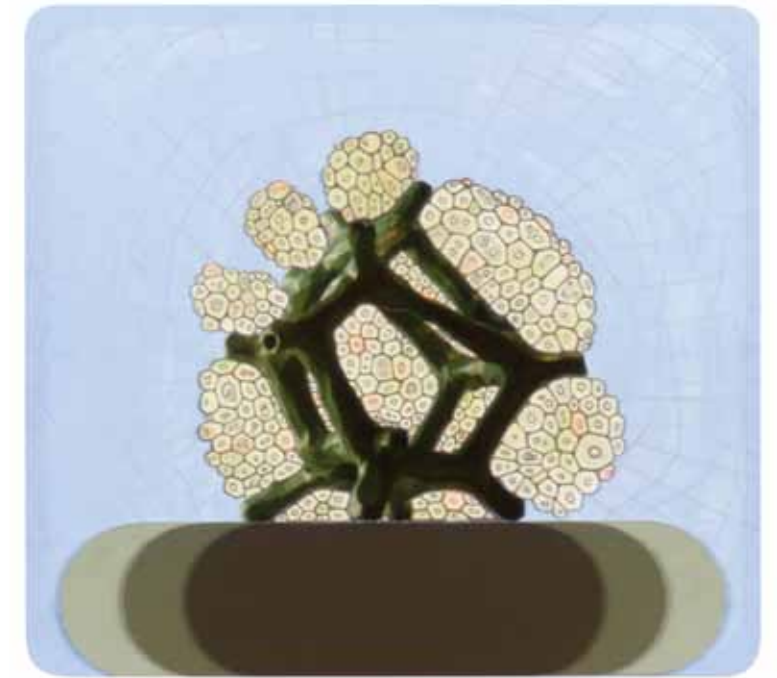
Known for his color palette of muted greens, grays, and blues, Ross's sensual application of paint and labored surfaces convey a synthetic quality reminiscent of science-fiction and unearthly discoveries. At the same time the works evoke landscape and ecological elements found in the natural world. The forms rendered in the paintings look like computer generated images, emphasizing their otherworldliness. His shaped canvases suggest the remnants of the original sculpted forms and are evidence of their evolution from the three dimensional realm to an image on a flat surface. The large-scale works envelop the viewer, as if he or she is standing before a magnified cross-section of a natural specimen that has been dissected and carefully examined. The delicately rendered drawings appear as meticulously analyzed samples under a microscope.

Ross's works are influenced by cultural trends in scientific studies such as biotechnology, genetics, artificial life, topography, and perceptions of cultural advancements in such fields of study. We live in a society of cloning, plastic surgery, and technological advancements that have replaced hand-made objects and manual labor. These advancements cause us to pose, "what is natural? what is artificial? how are they entwined and how does one decipher or choose between the two?" Ross's works exist in this gap between the natural and artificial, suggesting that, in the contemporary era, the two are not mutually exclusive.

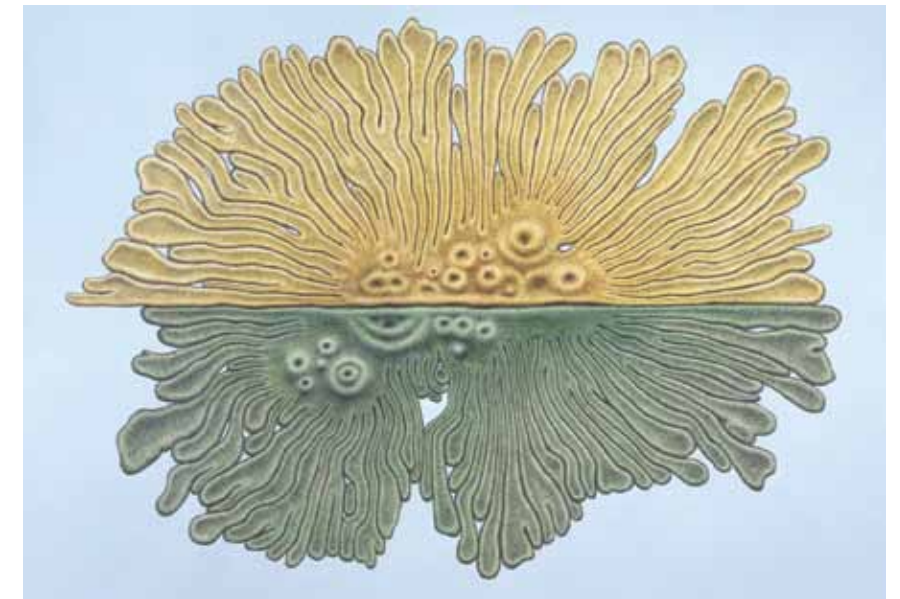
Andrea Green  
Curatorial Assistant



Untitled, 2000, oil paint on canvas, 69 x 88 inches. Collection of A.G. Rosen. Courtesy of Feature Inc., New York.



Untitled, 2000, color photograph, graphite, colored pencil on paper; 18 x 15 inches. Private Collection, New York. Courtesy of Feature Inc., New York.



Untitled, 2003, graphite, flashe, colored pencil, ink on paper, 30.25 x 43.75 inches. Private Collection, New York. Courtesy of Feature Inc., New York.