

VIS VISUAL ART eNEWSLETTER

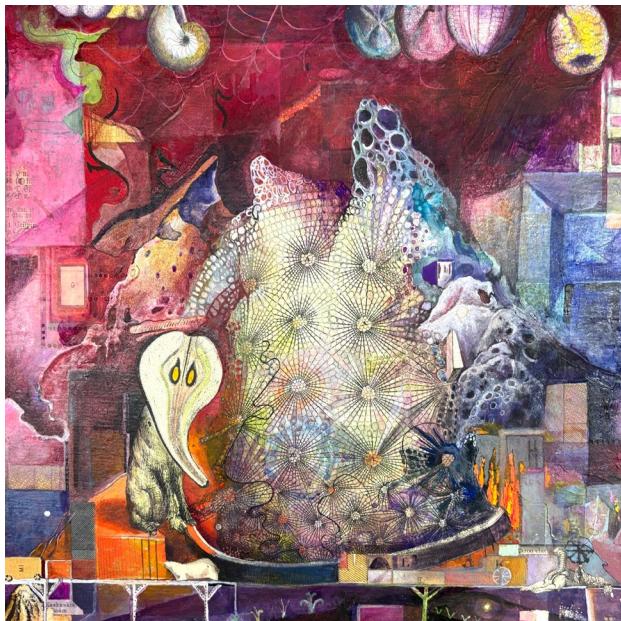
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PRESENTED BY VISUAL ART SOURCE, THE DEMOCRACY CHAIN and FABRIK

Josh Dorman, "The Long View"

by Jody Zellen

Billis / Williams, Los Angeles, CA, January 10 - February 14, 2026



Josh Dorman, "Peardog," 2025,
ink, acrylic, antique paper on panel, 12 x 12"



Josh Dorman, "Arctic Ice II," 2025,
ink, acrylic, antique paper on panel, 12 x 12"

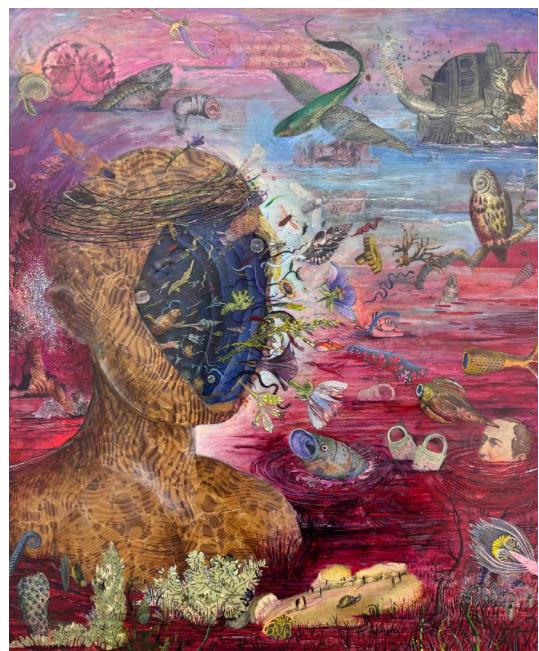
Josh Dorman's idiosyncratic, encyclopedic paintings traverse time and space. They are intricate works that demand our undivided attention. Over the years, Dorman has collected a wide range of printed ephemera, culled from books, maps, magazines and technical manuals, as well as player-piano scrolls, and uses it as pictorial source material. His layered works combine these paper documents with ink and acrylic to create narratives that weave through time.

"Peardog" (all works 2025), one of the smallest paintings in the exhibit at 12 by 12 inches, is also one of the best. Just left of the center of the composition is a "pear-dog" made by collaging a vintage image of a dog's body with an antique diagram of a sliced pear that becomes its head. In the image, the pear functions as eyes. This creature rests in a colorful but ambiguous space that contains both urban elements — geometric shapes representing buildings — and natural ones such as imagined seashells and stalagmites. Along the bottom of this packed painting is an elevated roadway that passes over tree-lined hills. Dotted throughout the composition are collaged fragments of both words and animal imagery.

In a larger painting, "A Golden Age" (32 by 42 inches), Dorman creates a dreamscape filled with inventive creatures that are amalgamations of animal skeletons with human heads and arms juxtaposed with tools like pliers, as well as parts from antique watches. These creatures wander through a deeply textured red-purple landscape filled with architectural fragments. Dorman bombards us with imagery, making it difficult to construct a coherent narrative. But telling a story is not the artist's intention. Dorman wants us to get lost in his worlds enough to begin connecting the various elements into our own interpretation.



Josh Dorman, "Peardog," 2025,
ink, acrylic, antique paper on panel, 12 x 12"



Josh Dorman, "Fever Dream," 2025,
ink, acrylic, antique paper on panel, 24 x 20"

During residencies above the Arctic Circle and off the coast of Ireland, Dorman observed glaciers and other features of the natural world he had not previously encountered. These impressions fill works like "Arctic Ice (Dodo)" and "Arctic Ice II," which are, uncharacteristically, more painting than collage. In both these pieces, Dorman brings together swirling bodies of water, jagged rock formations, and trapped animals, clearly a comment on our changing climate.

"Fever Dream" is a hauntingly surreal work that recalls Giorgio de Chirico's "The Two Masks" (1926). Central to the composition is the upper body and head of a figure submerged in a magenta-hued body of swirling water. The figure has a hollowed-out head. Emanating from where the face would be is a stream of sea creatures and plants flying into the polluted water. Typical of Dorman's signature style, he weaves painted areas around and has delicately colored and collaged various paper clippings. Fragments from maps and pieces of historical ships and antique depictions of fantastical creatures complete this dizzying and engaging imagery.

Dorman is a master at creating new contexts for found materials. Through recontextualization he refreshes much that is old or familiar. The works function as complex puzzles in which Dorman draws from the past to comment on the present and project into the future. Figures and animals from a wide range of sources and time frames in varying scales and opacities follow roads, cross bridges, populate seas, climb mountains and peer through architectural facades. Each work creates its own unique story that ingeniously links disparate elements from then to now.

Jody Zellen is a LA based writer and artist who creates interactive installations, mobile apps, net art, animations, drawings, paintings, photographs, public art, and artist's books. Zellen received a BA from Wesleyan University (1983), a MFA from CalArts (1989) and a MPS from NYU's Interactive Telecommunications Program (2009). She has exhibited nationally and internationally since 1989. For more information please visit www.jodyzellen.com