

Jennifer Dorner – Sky Vessels

The sky is far too big and ubiquitous to comprehend in human scale. We often notice it when something unusual or extraordinary happens in it: a pleasing sunset, interesting cloud formations, brewing storms or perhaps just an airplane passing through. The sky is like a constant background image. Perhaps its very magnitude contributes to our peculiar urge to build, in some futile gesture of competition, oversized roadside attractions of animals, seafood or pieces of fruit. In Jennifer Dorner's paintings, the sky becomes a conceptually-fused background for uncanny elements that give us a second, curious look at our everyday environment while questioning the time we spend in our surroundings.

The uncanny literally pops up in each of the *Sky Vessels* paintings. Floating in meticulously-rendered skies of varied blues, amongst wisps of clouds are the most unexpected contraptions: a Boeing 747 pulling a recreational vehicle, bottle rockets launched from a cruise ship, a military vessel carrying a roller coaster. Dorner builds an artificial sky and then populates it panel by panel with minuscule inventions that highlight bizarre attributes of recreational and leisure activities in Western culture. These tiny apparitions float past in fields of sky in much the same way roadside attractions do in a classic long-distance North American road trip. For long stretches the view is full of the same grass, trees and rock, when suddenly POOF! a giant lobster, moose, elastic band, or nickel appears.

The arrangements floating in Dorner's skies seem less improbable when one thinks of the ways our towns, villages, and companies have directed time, resources and energy towards highlighting some particular attribute of their place. Leisure is indeed big business. From cruise ships to roller coasters, whale watching to sky diving, relaxing demands a lot of work. What is perhaps truly bizarre is that if Dorner's *Sky Vessels* actually existed, there would probably be a lineup to use them.

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