

Jules de Balincourt

Unknowing Man's Nature

Zach Feuer

530 West 24th Street, Chelsea
Through Oct. 13

In his first New York solo appearance since decamping to Berlin, Jules de Balincourt continues to send up the enlightened global conscience on an increasingly varied scale. The 16 paintings and a sculpture in "Unknowing Man's Nature," all from this year, veer from notebook to carpet-size and from hedonism to grim survivalism. Mr. de Balincourt's stenciled slogans exhort us to "think globally and act locally" even as the tiny figures that populate his compositions seem to have given up the fight.

Two immense landscapes dominate: a sprawling coastal night-scape (possibly Los Angeles) and a melting glacier awash in neon pink. Both are stunning, if steroidal, flaunting the ray imagery Mr. de Balincourt used to such memorable effect in "Blind Faith and Tunnel Vision" (2005), the post-9/11 cityscape of his previous exhibition. In the smaller but similarly ominous "We Warned You About China," a map of that increasingly powerful nation is studded with candy-colored exclamation points.

The back rooms retreat into a too-familiar faux-naïveté via misspelled text, oddly placed works and a distracting sculpture of an erupting volcano. Tiny figures (natives? eco-tourists?) frolic beneath a waterfall in one of a series of tropical landscapes, oblivious to the crudely rendered subject of "Holy Arab" gazing down from the adjacent wall.

With his move to Europe, Mr. de Balincourt seems to have distanced himself from the folksy Americana of his earlier work; his challenge is to retain some of that intimacy and urgency without resorting to awkwardness.

KAREN ROSENBERG