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# ART TIMES

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## Critique

# Adam Straus at Nohra Haime Gallery

(Photos Courtesy Nohra Haime Gallery)

By **RAYMOND J. STEINER**

AT A TIME when landscape painters have to struggle for "relevancy," it is good to find galleries still willing to give them their full due. Adam Straus's "Sublimus Interruptus"\* is by any standards a spectacular exhibit and, notwithstanding his bid for the cachet of being environmentally sympathetic, shows us just how powerful sensitivity and skill can be when put in the service of depicting nature. Straus has, if anything, a large vision and in his majestic depictions of snow-topped mountains says about as much as any artist can about mankind's fragile and mysterious relationship to his world without having to enlist the aid of an outside agenda to bring home the message. Though the title to his show makes

obvious reference to it, anyone with an eye can see that Adam Straus has no compunctions about sharing with his viewers just precisely what he finds "sublime" in this world. An old-fashioned concept nowadays, a painter's sensibility in the face of nature was once considered a hallmark of artistic genius. Today, the painter who communes with nature is often seen as a throwback, a backward-looking hack who has not kept up with the times, an untalented imitator who can only paint the same old tiresome trees,



"Migration" (o/c Framed in Lead)



"King of the Mountain" (o/c Framed in Lead)

hills, streams and fields. Spend a few moments with Straus's mountains and broad-swept vistas, however, and if you don't get that stirring in the soul you have indeed lost touch with your humanity. Man, as Straus so aptly shows in his tiny figures atop his mountains, is still a long way from finding his home on this planet. The only "interruption" the sublime has suffered is surely all in the mind of a populace whose vision has become blurred by overconfidence in his own technology. After all is said and done, a mountain is still a mountain — and man, still a "poor forked animal" whose intelligence seems to shrink the more "civilized" he becomes. I say hurrah! for the artist who has the sense and the skill to confront nature on her own terms and to render her in paint for all to see. Not many of Straus's viewers have ever seen or visited the austere loneliness of mountaintops. To share such visions

is the artist's job. It is not for the artist to justify his work by referring it to the newest politically correct dogma — environmental or not — but to help us to see — something that Straus is eminently qualified to do. A painter's painter, he handles sky, sea, and land confidently — so confidently, in fact, that his work far overshadows whatever statement his cumbersome and dreary lead frames were meant to convey. A skilled craftsman, Adam Straus has all that it takes to help restore landscape painting to its proper status as an important element in the evolution of art and, more importantly, showing that it still is one of the best ways to lead mankind back to a sense of whole

\*"Adam Straus: Sublimus Interruptus" (Feb 17-Mar 15): Nohra Haime Gallery, 41 East 57<sup>th</sup> St., NYC (212) 888-3550

