

Ober, C. LIGHT FROM DARK: TWO NEW EXHIBITS AT GOYA CONTEMPORARY GALLERY HIGHLIGHT CONTRASTING VALUES, in *Urbanite* magazine, Tracy Ward, Baltimore, USA, September

Harking back to its origins as a print atelier, Goya Contemporary Gallery this month presents two concurrent solo exhibits of prints by South African Paul Emmanuel and Baltimorean Lynn Silverman. Emmanuel's *Transitions Multiples* occupies the main gallery and includes photorealistic lithographic prints and a fourteen-minute experimental film. Silverman's self-titled exhibit in the smaller gallery includes black and white photographs from her ongoing Lookout and Lifelines series. While the literal subject matter from the two exhibits couldn't be more different, the content is satisfyingly reflexive. Both Emmanuel and Silverman are masters of the high contrast narrative. Both tell poignant stories with esoteric detail and focus on the most basic element in visual art: black and white contrast, maximized for dramatic impact.

*Transitions Multiples* includes five large, hand-pulled lithographic prints that appear, from a distance, to be black and white photographs. Up close, tens of thousands of tiny hatch marks thrill the eye as one contemplates the dizzying amount of labor involved. The lithographic process is similar to a scratchboard technique—the artist carves white marks out of a black surface, in this case a flat lithography stone, which is then inked and printed on a press. Emmanuel spent the last six years working on the prints, several of which include a triptych of film-like sequences, and each print took approximately four months to complete. As a white South African and a gay man, the artist's work explores transitional moments in life, with an emphasis on masculine coming-of-age rituals and specific emphasis on the military.

Emmanuel's experimental film, *3SAI: A Rite of Passage*, 2008, is displayed on a flat screen television approximately the same size as his prints, and documents the head shaving of new army recruits at the Third South African Infantry Battalion. In a simple narrative structure, the film documents young men arriving as individuals and leaving as identical army property. Close-up views of faces are punctuated with sprawling views of South African farmland, empty except for rows of clotheslines laden with identical white shirts, gently blowing in the breeze. The eerie comparison between young men and a mass-produced product for consumption is apt: Emmanuel's surreal landscapes allow you to see his human subjects, metaphorically, in context. The arresting image of the white shirts is also depicted in two of Emmanuel's lithographs, *Parade of Shadows*, 2009 and *Field of Flames*, 2011.

Besides their technical intensity, Emmanuel's prints are animated by a strange and ethereal light, which veers unexpectedly into piercing blacks. In his landscapes, the daytime sky is oddly dark and, in *Number 05000674PV*, 2010, an army recruit's profile is rendered as a silhouette, although the rest of the image is rich with detail. The overall effect is both personal and universal, haunting and provocative.

Paul Emmanuel's *Transitions Multiples* and Lynn Silverman's works at Goya Contemporary will be up through November 5. A partner exhibit of Emmanuel's work, *Paul Emmanuel: Transitions*, can be viewed at MICA through October 2, 2011.