

Modern Painters
Reviews, December 2007
Joseph R. Wolin

DUBLIN

TOM MOLLOY
RUBICON GALLERY

Tom Molloy's mural-size watercolor on paper, *Fall* (all works 2007), features thousands of tiny skeletons. Painted on black paper in white and several shades of gray to suggest depth, they appear to drift down from the top of the work and pile up at the bottom. Falling like snowflakes, Molloy's bony figures have a darkly comic effect, yet, like almost any depiction of plummeting bodies these days, they inescapably evoke the quickly suppressed footage of people dropping from the twin towers on 9/11, as well as the disastrous response to that tragedy, and the mounting toll of death in Afghanistan and Iraq, where bodies are accumulating as thickly as ashes from a burning building.

A deft use of blunt images for maximum symbolic resonance characterizes much of Molloy's practice. *Dove*, a mirrored pair of meticulous pencil sketches of a bird skeleton—one in black, the other white—renders the hopeful symbol for peace as a carcass destined for a musty museum of natural history. Other works make geopolitics explicit. In *Covenant*, Molloy makes a rainbow from a row of books about America and the Middle East. In *Sweep* (*Irish Times*, Monday, June 19, 2006), a terrorist bombing in Sri Lanka seeps into our comfortable existence in the form of blood dripping down the wall from behind the frame of a drawn image of the cleanup after the violence. The exhibition checklist identifies the blood as the artist's own, making the political as personal as possible.

—JOSEPH R. WOLIN



TOM MOLLOY, *SWEEP (IRISH TIMES, MONDAY, JUNE 19, 2006)* (DETAIL), 2007. PENCIL ON PAPER AND BLOOD, DRAWING: 6 X 8 IN. PHOTO: DENIS MORTELL, COURTESY RUBICON GALLERY, DUBLIN.

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