



# INTERNATIONAL PAPER

DRAWINGS BY EMERGING ARTISTS

UCLA **HAMMER** MUSEUM

## AARON MORSE

BORN 1974 TUCSON; LIVES IN LOS ANGELES

Drawing on nineteenth-century literature and nonfiction—works like Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* and James Fenimore Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans*—Aaron Morse's works are adventure tales that celebrate a time romanticized by authors and artists—one might say the first extreme-style life. Working in an all-over compositional style, he depicts the romantic landscape and seascape, as well as fabled characters of yore. Also inspired by graphic novels, Morse often works in a storyboard format. *Canoe Epic* (2002) is just that: six frames of a classic explorer and Indian guide story, stretched vertically, like an old wide-screen movie looks when viewed on a small television.

Morse's interest in nineteenth-century literature specifically lies in the overlapping of genres created by modern fiction's fascination with the "frontier." Cooper's popular stories depicted a time almost one hundred years before his writing. One hundred years after their publication, comic writers compressed these adventure stories into comic novels. Morse sees his project as an imagined end to this epic, prompting him to stretch and manipulate the images, almost as if tweaking the pictures is all that's left of the adventure. He appropriates imagery from various sources: comics of the 1940s, period illustrations, paintings, and old postcards.

Morse's works have a color-blocked appearance, like old posters or comic strips, and reflect his printmaking background. His watercolors are always composed of three colors (or a mixture thereof)—cyan, magenta, and yellow—known as process colors in commercial printing. This approach provides visual building blocks and maintains a formal thread in the work.

J. P.