

Nina Katchadourian



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**AT CATHARINE CLARK, NINA KATCHADOURIAN CHASES
ART'S MOBY DICK**

THE DAILY PIC is a life-size paper cutout of a killer whale (aka, orca) filling one wall of Nina Katchadourian's installation called "[To Feel Something That Was Not of Our World](#)," at Catherine Clark in San Francisco for only a few more days.

I guess I've always imagined that, before photography, one of art's main functions was just to tell viewers about stuff that's out there in the world. Theodore Gericault's "Raft of the Medusa" was meant to give news and views of a recent shipwreck, for instance, and it's said he worked like mad to get his details right.

He comes off as a piker compared to Katchadourian, whose show documents her obsessive, almost lifelong search for information about the 1972 shipwreck and 38-day drift of the Robertson family, after their sailboat was wrecked by a pod of orcas out in the far Pacific.

The single, illusionistic image has had such vast appeal in European culture that we've treated it as a decent surrogate for the world as it is. But the dozens and dozens of drawings, sculptures, documents and interviews that Katchadourian includes in her show makes clear that a real immersion in the real requires ... immersion.

And even then, you will always, always be so far from the real that only artistic license can make your view cohere.

So the obsessive detail in Katchadourian's show doesn't really document the success of her quest. It documents its inevitable, heroic failure.

It's Picasso portraying Kahnweiler, if he hadn't been stuck with one canvas and a few lousy brushes.

For a full survey of past Pics visit blakegopnik.com/archive.

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