

Eugène Delacroix Paints the Terrors of Heroism

THE DAILY PIC: In "Cosmic Connections" at Totah gallery, Delacroix has a vision of a horse and his hero.

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THE DAILY PIC (#1690): The group show called “[Cosmic Connections](http://www.artnet.com/galleries/totah/exhibitions/)” at Totah gallery in New York, has its share of big, splashy, determinedly “cosmic” pictures. That’s why I think it was such a good move for the gallery to have included this tiny watercolor of an Arab horseman, painted by Eugène Delacroix in 1838. It is cosmic the way a neutron star is cosmic: A sun’s worth of energy compressed into the smallest of spaces.

I particularly like the way a painting that ought to be heroic and macho actually comes across as full of terrors: Horse and rider, both wild-eyed, seem trapped in the heroic roles they are supposed to assume. They wish they could gallop their way out of their heroism. I’m reminded of the character of Flashman, the Victorian bouncer, in the historical novels of George MacDonald Fraser.

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