

CARLOS LLERENA AGUIRRE

Ultimus Tribus, 2012
Woodcut, 25 x 12 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST

BRANDON KILBOURNE

Dioramic Idylls

I.

Building dioramas
rigid and resonant,
deft hands stage untouched
wildernesses like requiems
for guttering species:

Returning from the bamboo understory, the red
panda balancing on a thinning branch of canopy.

Following the riverbank below the escarpment,
three takins navigating Bhutanese mists.

These facsimiles of living
anatomies motionlessly evoke
a nature unscathed
in our visitor eyes—

Swept by the museum's alcoves
homing carefully arrayed wax
leaves, croppings of mangroves, gleanings
of cloud forests, mounted skins
of floe-berthed walrus and scree-denned pika,
we press a relic
dream upon animal faces:
pockets of earth escaped
intact, harmony rippling

from advancing girders and asphalt,
vanguard clearings for farmland.

Hermetic behind their glass pane,
we find the addaxes exotic, their coats
candent against Libya's red sands,

yet we know innately

the ecology of vultures:

a zebra's rigored limb jutting
from their throng, their raised wings
veil their gore-riddled beaks.

The hyenas stalk their frenzy.

II.

October 17, 1912
Faradje, Belgian Congo

We negotiated the ransacking's trails—
the train bypassing rock-thrash
rapids, the small stations stringing
coastal Boma to Stanley Pool;
the steamboat chugging up the horizon-
flood river, anchoring evening
explorations en route to Stanleyville;
the seven-month trudge alongside porting
shoulders, black torsos made filing
packhorses to bring us to far-off Faradje.
Availing ourselves of inroads for felled ivory,
we skirted like puddles yesterday's
blood wrung out by charnel rubber:

Bodies peeled to sap and bone,
the numberless number:

hands littering the dirt like
bullet casings, stumps

shrieking for fingers
and palms piled in baskets—