

At Kerns Art Center Trotter, Oda, Nakamura, Aller

Review by Elizabeth E. Brinton

I like referring to Maude Kerns Art Center as "Maude's." Now, with a new approach, and an updated look, the center is calling itself simply Kerns Art Center. The west studio is now an extension of the main gallery, and it is a good place for viewing prints and photographs.

fantastic multiple imagery

Claire Trotter's classic landscape photography now displayed there falls clearly into the west coast, black and white, large format tradition. A meditative viewing of these works clears the mind, and conjures up remembrances of some familiar places. "On the Santiam" and "Dunes Early Morn" point up the abundance of beauty so near.

I don't know if newness is a legitimate value in art, but it is difficult to find anything new in Trotter's work. The photographs are every bit as proficient and as handsome as the works of Ansel Adams, or the Westons. But in the great similarity of imagery and process, the danger emerges. The challenge for Trotter exists in the necessity to avoid doing what has already been done, and to remain fresh.

In several pieces the artist succeeds in bringing her work into a more individualized vision. Trotter has brilliant success bringing about a distinctive little miracle in the piece titled "Celebration." This photograph, upon close examination, reveals the surface of a cut log. The saw marks over the surface of the wood, combined with the pattern of the growth rings, create fantastic multiple imagery.

There is a sense of movement and exuberance here, in this changeable abstraction, which moves beyond some of the artist's other works.

uncanny spatial effects

Photographer Will Hiroshi Oda displays a large number of small photographs in part of the main gallery (shared with ceramic artist Faye Nakamura), and also in the mezzanine/balcony area. Oda reveals his search for the center of his work by showing several different directions.

Basic areas of exploration are threefold. Oda refers to one group as "Surface/Decoration," and to another as "Fragmentary Recollection." These two groups are hand colored platinum prints with fantastic tactile suggestion built by the sensitive use of objects and materials with contrasting textures. Pieces of lace, antique fabric, parts of garments seem to reach into a sensual realm.

The third direction for Oda is his work titled "Dreams of Reality/Reality of Dreams." This more traditional work is large format, black and white work, with some use of multiple exposure. Figures appear in landscape, nudes walk down a theater aisle, men float in wilderness pools. Sky appears from beneath the rock in "No. 3" making for uncanny spatial effects. A similar thing happens in a piece from the "Surface/Decoration" group in "No. 16" (a hand colored platinum print) where cranes fly across the kimono fabric in a surreal sky, pulling us beyond the surface.

It was great fun finding these connections between Oda's differing pursuits. I loved finding

my own way through the complexity of themes and motifs.

a primitive celebration

Faye Nakamura's ceramic work is showing in the main gallery. It is nice to see the work of artists who have been working in Eugene for many years. We get the chance to be in on the development and to celebrate the results of persistent labors.

Nakamura's work has blossomed. Over the years her work has always been a window into a tropical paradise. Large platters, vases, and tiled wall pieces are populated by beautiful, doe eyed nudes, peering at us through the foliage. Sometimes these ladies are wrapped or turbaned in exotic fabrics. Nakamura continues to explore her paradise, and to challenge herself in some new work which is much like relief sculpture.

In two of the thicker wall reliefs, titled "Mask and Chameleon" and "Blue Primitive," the artist uses tile elements, sea shells and bold figures to break out of her demure reticence into a primitive celebration. All of the Nakamura figures are less shy, more sure of themselves, and of their place in paradise, than they ever were in the more tentative, pastel eras of the artist's past.

Even though all of Nakamura's ceramic pieces can stand alone as works of art, they thrive with use. I once saw one of her tall vases full of flowers, and was delighted to realize that the figure on the vase was now graced with a flowery hat. Surely fruits or fishes are more delectable when served on one of the platters. This is wonderful art to use, and will surely become increasingly valuable.



Tile Set by Faye Nakamura

cartoonish mythical worlds

In the platform gallery, Desiree Aller is showing prismacolor drawings which are abstract, with strong landscape elements. These landscapes are cartoonish mythical worlds, with floating shapes built with layer after layer of identical marks of colored pencil. These small dashes grow into veils of brilliant color. The shapes have some humor, and there are surely stories to be invented about

these environments. I envision a wonderful animated film made with these images. I hope Aller pushes this work farther. "Desert Garden with Red Coyote" was my favorite, because of its funny forms and light spirit. "Grove" was a scarier mood with a figure running from something. The work seems to suggest modern fairy tales. Lots of fun.

Well, I will probably always call Kerns Art Center "Maude's." It is a comfortable name for a comfortable place. Trotter, Oda, Nakamura and Aller will have their work up until November 29th. Maude's is located at 1910 E. 15th.

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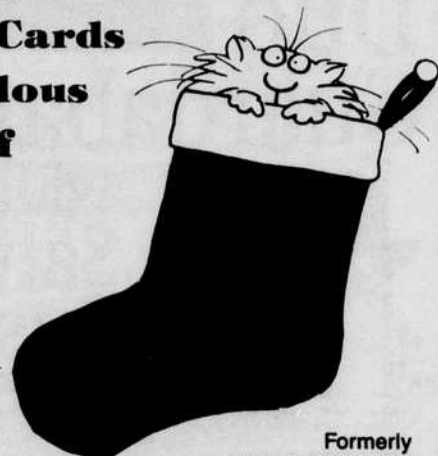
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