

**Mechanics
that fix
everything.
Including
your
conscience.**



**PDX Automotive is a certified
Eco-Logical Business.**

(503) 282-3315



Oregon certified DEQ repair facility
AAA approved repair shop
ASE Certified Mechanics

Gerard Lillie • 5934 N.E. Halsey



**LAURELHURST
DENTISTRY**

**CLARICE JOHNSTON D.M.D.
& ASSOCIATES**

- Treatment explained and discussed
- Teeth whitening
- New patients welcome

503/233-3622
2520 East Burnside



ART

Portland artist Jesse Geisheker paints male nudes. I anticipated that during our meeting at Scandals, where his new series hangs through Nov. 5, we would talk about art, painting, maybe gender and sexuality. Pretty straightforward, really.

After making my way to the popular gay hangout's back bar and viewing Geisheker's most recent work, I realized there was much more to this man's art than I had anticipated.

I was first struck by the colors that leapt from the white walls—deep electric turquoises and chartreuses. The occasional surprise of something salmon. The colors brought about the feeling I had as a little girl seeing a tide pool for the first time. These colors, or the fact that these colors actually occurred in nature, left me feeling giddy. The same could be said staring at these watery blue canvases.

Geisheker's paintings of male figures underwater are homoerotic in content but also possess an overwhelming dreamlike quality. His mastery of figure painting is evident in his application of oil to canvas, while moving from traditional locales to more surreal ones.

"Dreaming and Swimming" depicts a nude man swimming through an ocean of subconscious images—some visceral, others erotic. One million shades of turquoise leap from the canvas, which, like the others, is surrounded by an ornate, kitsch-meets-Baroque shell-encrusted frame.

The frames, Geisheker explains, were an afterthought. "I had intended to hang the paintings unframed. Then I began to experiment with building my own, taking pieces from old frames, casting shells and pieces of coral. Now I see that the frames are an integral part of the pieces themselves."

In "Dejuner Sur l'Herbe," Geisheker reinvents the traditional Manet painting of the same name and places it in a sexual context. And yet his treatment lacks the sense of intrusion, the voyeuristic elements present in the original. The feeling surrounding this rendition is one of calm beauty, of green canopies and dappled light. Being one of his most important pieces, the emotion it evokes is not surprising.

"It represents a process," Geisheker explains. "I was once nervous about showing this one to certain people. To make a painting of what excited me and feel no shame was liberating."

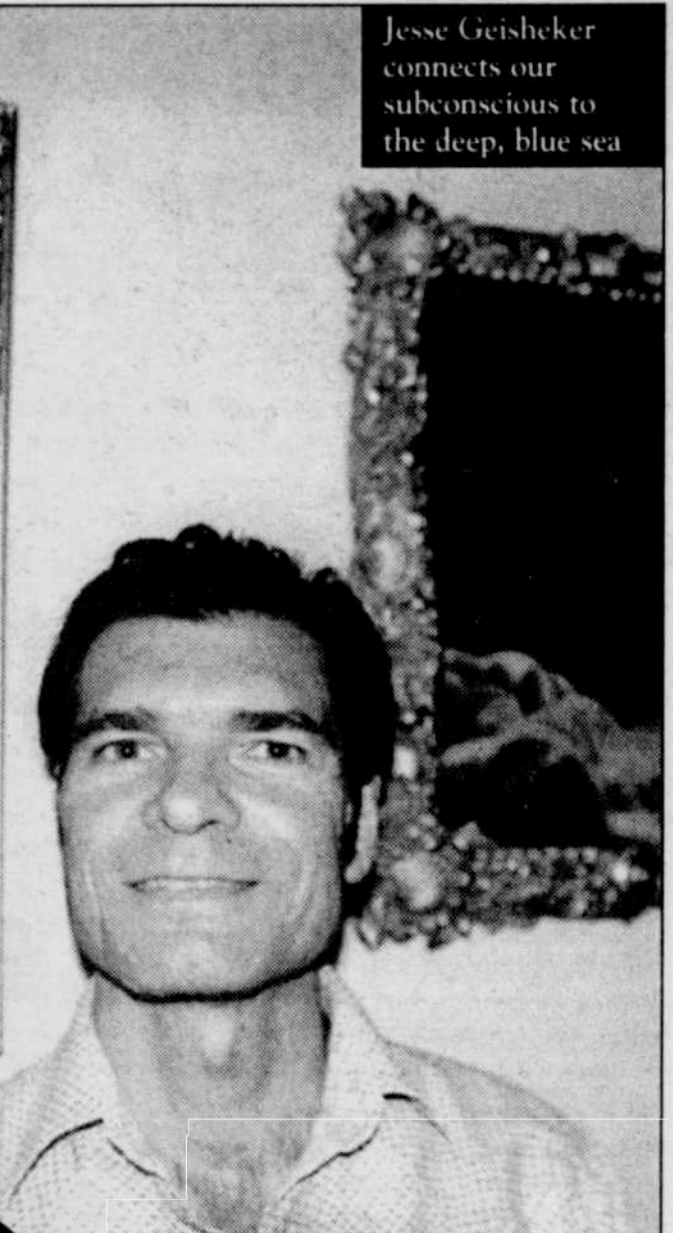
Geisheker's education has been made up of equal parts classroom, studio and travel. He received a bachelor's degree in painting from University of Washington and attended University of Oregon as well as the Academy of Art in San Francisco.

His inspiration, he explains, comes less from formal studies than the experiences that avail themselves through travel and, in his case, dreaming. "The underwater theme was definitely influenced by my time living on Vieques Island in Puerto Rico. I spent a lot of time snorkeling and painting."

Geisheker's desire to bring out subconscious imagery in a clear way is evident. "There's a world that exists underwater that many of us will never see," he says. "It relates a lot to parts of ourselves we may or may not choose to see. Our subconscious and dreaming need to be explored in the same way. That's what I'm trying to do in these paintings—tie together the idea of the subconscious and being underwater."

Becoming more connected to ourselves through dreams and the subconscious is an idea that sharply contrasts with the current epidemic of external focus: consumerism, greed and a culture that emotionally and spiritually numbs itself with anti-depressants instead of working to understand real problems.

PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS



Jesse Geisheker connects our subconscious to the deep, blue sea

A surreal sea
Portland gay painter Jesse Geisheker likes his guys underwater
BY JODI DARBY

"It is a political message," Geisheker states. "We can't possibly evolve as a society if we deny the things that make us conscious beings. We are being distracted and numbed until we have no idea who we are or where we're going. We're on Prozac, Paxil, whatever, because we're told that it's better to not go there, to not deal with the things that make us human."

That, he states, is downright dangerous. "We can't have a revolutionary movement if we are cut off from ourselves. If we're cut off from ourselves we will then cut ourselves from others, and exclusion is very dangerous. Exclusion creates oppression, hatred, wars. Whether it is a personal revolution, a political or a sexual one, we must go about it in a conscious way."

Geisheker spent most of his youth in New Zealand and recently returned from Thailand. His goal is to make enough

money to get by and to have enough time to make art.

"For this particular series I was cloistered," he notes. "I was really absorbed in the work."

He considers meditation, reading and keeping a dream journal a part of the process that goes along with painting. "Sometimes I will wake up after having a dream and try to sort of re-enter it on canvas. Sometimes I just see colors, so I paint colors. The closer I can get to recapturing the dream in a visual way, the more successful I feel the painting is."

Geisheker cites Salvador Dali as an influence, which is evident in the incorporation of surreal elements in his own work that takes them to yet another level of otherworldliness.

In both "Dreaming and Swimming" and "Shell Man Reclining," these elements are alive and well. "When I was traveling, a friend sent me a book of Dali's work. It was perfect. At the time it was the only visual inspiration I needed."

Geisheker works as a scenic artist at Will Vinton Studios, specializing as an inker and cell animator. He has also dabbled in music, as both singer and songwriter. Eventually, though, he says he "realized that visual art was what really drove me. I stopped doing music so I could devote more time to it."

But his varied experiences in animation, prop and costume design, scenic art and stage makeup enable him to continue doing what he loves most. Like most full-time artists, Geisheker yearns for the day when he can put all of his energies into his personal work.

Until then, he will continue to pay attention. "I really feel that what I am experiencing in my life is important. Not in an ego-based way, but in a way that makes me realize that our realities are much, much bigger than what we see in front of our faces. Every day we need to pay attention to everything." □

JESSE GEISHEKER's paintings are on display through Nov. 5 at Scandals, 1038 S.W. Stark St.

JODI DARBY is a Portland free-lance writer, graphic designer and radio producer.



"Aaron with Sea Harlequin Headdress"