

Three Artists, Two Shows

Eugene art scene highlights

For DIVA's newest exhibition, Steven Oshatz — artist and co-founder of Tancho Images, a silk-printing studio — digitally printed images from the Hubble Telescope. A friend asked him if the images were art, a question Oshatz included in one of the prints: *Isthisart?Isthisart?Isthisart?*

Whether it is art obviously depends on your definition, and you may decide for yourself. In my view, it is. Such photography requires immense skill from teams of people, from setting up and using digital cameras aboard the Hubble to creating a color photograph out of a combination of black-and-white exposures representing different colors of light.

Colors are assigned during image processing for functional rather than aesthetic reasons — either to represent what the human eye would see or to visualize what it couldn't, such as an object viewed in infrared light, or to highlight detail or enhance structure. The scientists involved view this process as "equal parts art and science."

The result is not only beautiful but also provocative, bound to make us think and wonder about the most fundamental questions: the origin and meaning of the universe and our place in it. Or, as Oshatz said: "It takes me to the very edge of my imagination, and that's where I want to go."

These images are freely shared by their original creators. You, too, can download them. But few of us have Oshatz's capacity to print large-format images such as these. His work is excellent, and his contribution extends the work of the Hubble project to the rest of us, as it deserves to be. "Images from the Universe" will be at DIVA through June 26.

Also at DIVA, Marsha Wells' conté-crayon figurative studies stand out for their strength. Wells' predilection for foreshortening, which provides dynamic visual interest, characterizes these figures executed during 20-minute poses at the MKAC's open studio.

"I always go with the foreshortened look because it forces me to look really carefully," Wells said. "I move around until I find an angle that changes the dynamic of standard poses."

Wells' figures fill the entire picture plane to the point of intersecting with the frame. Image functions as a compositional element that divides and configures the two-dimensional space. This is reminiscent of Richard Diebenkorn, whom Wells admires, as are the fluidity of line, its rephrasings, and the gestural quality of the drawings. But Wells' space is less flat and compressed.

"I want to position the model in space," she said. "I want it to be a real space. That's why I often add a chair to the composition. The chair provides a sense of distance and perspective. I like having something 2D and something 3D. It brings a tension and dynamic that I really enjoy."

Although Wells' concerns are primarily formalist in nature, she also captures expression and conveys something of her model's mood and personality. The use of yellow conté crayon to tone the paper and the sienna of shadows contribute to the warmth and aliveness of the drawings. "Drawn from Life" figures are at DIVA through June 26.

Karin Clarke Gallery's "Life, Still-Life and Landscape" is devoted to George Kettlewell's distinctive watercolors, many monochromatic and relying on gradation of value. Value in Kettlewell tends to the dark, sometimes the very dark, as in the *Tart* series, where only a trace of light from the paper is allowed to show through otherwise almost opaque blacks to outline a reflecting edge. An exception is *Crow, Gully and Fish*, a delicate rendering in light sepia, its figures barely suggested. It's one of my favorites in the show.

Kettlewell does remarkably well with chiaroscuro. Light seems to emanate from his grouped *Wildflowers*, silhouetted against a dark sepia background, as if they were incan-

descent. Among the series of low-key, dark, humble *Mushrooms*, #3 and especially #5 also appear to glow from within with a magical effect, while in #2, fungus-like texture comes alive.

Among the polychromatic flower paintings, which I find uneven, *Carnations #1* is a particularly good example of dramatic chiaroscuro effect. At times, though, the heavy layering results in muddied colors. When colors are light and transparent, the mood remains subdued, as if the flowers retain an impression of earlier rain.

Kettlewell's sepia-toned landscapes are

understated, atmospheric, brooding. A tree silhouette emerges from fog. A bank of clouds hangs low over a group of trees, engulfing their tops (#5). A small town shimmers with light between a sand expanse to the fore and in the distance dark mountains merging into clouds (*Beach Front*). Behind somber tree-trunks, a clearing fills with diffused light; mist shrouds what lies beyond (*Forest*).

Through it all, Kettlewell's gesture and stroke remain light and free, suggestive and open. His exhibition runs through June 26. **EW**



Wendy, Conté Crayon, by Marsha Wells.

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