



UO MFA Exhibit

The elegant work of painter Marshall Roemen.

Here's one good reason to see the Masters of Fine Arts Exhibit at the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art: the work of painter Marshall Roemen. Eight other good reasons are the work by painter Todd Griffith; photography by Amjad Faur and Angaleen Schroeder; metalsmithing and jewelry by Ukiko Honda; printmaking by Kristie A. Johnson and Chadwick Tolley; fibers by Sally Metcalf; and visual design by Joseph Stengel-Goetz.

Roemen is a Eugenean, raised by a supportive, privileged family, educated at Roosevelt and South Eugene, and encouraged in his career choice of fine art by his mother, also an abstract painter. He is a thoughtful, well-spoken man, looking for-

ward to getting married in July and moving with his wife to L.A. or New York to pursue their careers.

Roemen's large, mysterious, representational painting, *Predicament* (mixed media with silver leaf, 13'4" x 13'4"), is perfect for this space. I'm pleased Roemen took the risk of working on such a large scale for the museum's first MFA exhibit. He has created elegant, interesting work in both *Predicament* and an abstract diptych on the opposite wall entitled *Ruach* (mixed media with silver leaf on linen, 10'6" x 14').

The figure in *Predicament* seems to ask her image reflected in a silver platter a serious, introspective question, such as "Who am I?" I feel she is not looking back at her

life, but pondering questions about the future. My daughter was 10 years old when we moved to Eugene, and I recalled how her dreams changed and deepened as she approached puberty. I ran some of these thoughts by Roemen, and he said the figure was inspired by his younger sister, Lyla, who is 11.

"The figure dissolves into the space it inhabits," he said. "I was interested in obscuring the face, articulating the space around her in the room, and showing that it is a silver platter she's looking into." The platter relates to privilege he said. The predicament the artist expresses is one of reflection and self-reflection.

The silver leaf in *Predicament* began with putting something of material worth in the work, Roemen said. But the way silver tarnishes, the way it reflects light and the way it makes the light in the room part of the painting are part of the process. "First you do, then you assess," he said, "rather than prescribe from the beginning."

I hope viewers spend a few minutes with *Predicament*, sitting nearby or moving away to look from a distance. It's a very strong painting, but the emotions it carries are subtle and require time to emerge.

I asked Roemen the most interesting comment anyone had made about his work. "Where are we?" he said. A person who had been looking at the two panels of *Ruach* was uncertain whether the painting depicted something that existed within an atom (the micro view) or was as expansive as the universe.

Roemen's goal in *Ruach* was to get "outside of easily recognized forms and outside myself," he said. He worked on his studio floor. He began with a large, sweep of paint across the width of the two pieces, like an

under-painting of transparent gray or charcoal. This has led some people to see wings or butterflies there, rather like Rorschach inkblot patterns, he said. "Depending on where the painting is shown, different things emerge," the painter said, noting that the silver leaf in particular looked different in his studio than in the gallery.

The surprise of what occurs in the act of painting — the dynamic of painting — is the process Roemen most enjoyed. "Forms and colors started to emerge," he said. "I thought of the painting as an environment into which I could put anything."

Ruach is a Hebrew word that refers to "the animating force or breath of God," Roemen said, "or to the shared breath of people. I didn't want to depict the breath of God but rather the notion that you share somehow in this. Breath is imparted to you. In a sense, ruach is the understanding of yourself as a creator."

At the UO, Roemen studied for three years with painting teachers Ron Graff, Laura Vandenburg and Carla Bengtson. He has worked as a commercial artist, an illustrator and a muralist. One of his murals



Detail of *Ruach*

can be seen in the Gilbert Shopping Center on Highway 99. Catch the work of this creative painter now, at the beginning of his career, before he goes off to one of the big cities to make his mark. The show runs through June 26. **EW**

**Join us
On June
18th
SHOP for A SWING**

**UNIQUE
EUGENE**

A portion of your purchase will help build swings at Riverplay, Eugene's first regional playground at Skinner Butte Park

**OREGON
ART
SUPPLY**

**1020 Pearl St
683-2787**

Discover The Aqua Serene Experience

Garden Art & Accessories

Exotic Gift Items From Around the World

Largest Selection of Fresh & Saltwater Fish in the NW

Huge Inventory Wide Variety

NW Largest Selection of Hydroponic Products

All-Fish Pet Shop

Hydroponic Center

Aquatic Garden Center And More

Like no other store on Earth!

2836 W. 11th • Eugene • 541-302-9073 • www.aquaserene.com