



Vista 4 (left) and Vista 16 (below right)
by John Jay Cruson

Cruson's work here is similar to the photography of Andreas Gursky in its tricky manipulation of line and vantage point. Some works feel like snapshots taken from the highest hill in the vicinity. Others feel as if they're looking down from a hot air balloon or, for cheaters, scrolling through Google Earth. Perhaps this airy feeling is what Cruson means when he writes in his artist statement that he "feels a sense of freedom" while designing his canvases.

Rather than painting *en plein air*, Cruson does quick sketches in the field to evoke the

Those viewers can find in these paintings a sly commentary on humankind's footprint on the earth. *Farmland #19* presents the most rigorously cultivated landscape, complete with manmade lakes, dike roads and rows of orchards. In fact the scene is so surreal I can almost see it as a screenshot from a video game, such are its unnatural curvatures and roadside trees and shrubs.

This is art about agriculture, about the human need to cut down trees and grow crops and delineate fields and roads, marking territory on a passive landscape. People often witness such human footprints and recoil in disgust. Cruson sees beyond this environmental



Fields, Lines and Layers

New work by John Jay Cruson at White Lotus

Some paint in fields, some paint in lines and some paint in layers. The Renaissance jack-of-all-trades Leonardo da Vinci painted using the *sfumato* technique, subtly overlaying numerous layers of translucent pigments to create a borderless tableau where each color blended into the next. This technique worked best in da Vinci's backgrounds, where he blended various amounts of blue pigment to the faraway hills to give them what essayist Rebecca Solnit describes as "the blue of distance." For John Jay Cruson, whose new landscape paintings hang this month at White Lotus Gallery, the focus is on perspective, not distance, and his technique is to paint in fields, lines and layers.

Cruson, a former art instructor at OSU and UO, knows his subject matter well, having grown up in the agricultural hills

of Northern California. After a similar show of landscapes at White Lotus in 2004, Cruson's new paintings return to his fascination with the open spaces of Eastern Oregon. His titling is simpler this time, with the subject either a *Vista* or *Farmland*, and his textures are beefed up. Shadows reveal depth to orchards, subtle brush strokes denote a grassy hillock, rows of alfalfa, a field of poppies or endless wheatfields.

Vista #16 offers a zoom-lens perspective on a dusty and demarcated landscape. The effect flattens the canvas in a near Post-Impressionist sense (Cruson is just a few blurry brushstrokes away from being a Cézanne copy-cat) but gives just enough of a hint that a horizon exists — somewhere — out there. Other paintings, like *Vista #4*, give such ruler straight horizon lines as to be unbelievable.

It's either breathtakingly beautiful or achingly disturbing, but hardly both.

curvilinear shapes and then retreats to his studio for the actual painting. His sketchbook is available to view at White Lotus, and I suggest checking it out.

But what about the subject matter? How can Cruson make the plain valleys and hills of Eastern Oregon interesting to the viewer who has a distaste for scenery?

concern and presents landscapes in the human terms in which they exist. It's either breathtakingly beautiful or achingly disturbing, but hardly both. **EW**

Cruson's paintings show at White Lotus Gallery through June 3.

ENTER TO WIN

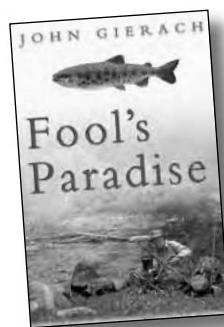
A PAIR OF TICKETS TO:

MICHAEL FRANTI & SPEARHEAD

CUTHBERT AMPHITHEATER • SATURDAY MAY 24TH

ENTER AT EUGENEWEEKLY.COM





John Gierach *Fool's Paradise*

Reading, Reception & Book Signing
Monday, May 12, 2008 • 7 p.m. • FREE
The Duck Store, Upstairs in the Literary Duck

"The solution to any problem... is to go fishing, and the worse the problem, the longer the trip."
-- John Gierach, Author



Leigh Anne Jasheway-Bryant & Jesse Springer *Laugh Track & Field:*

A Short, Funny, and Partly Made Up Look at Track Town USA and the Wacky World of Track and Field

Reading, Reception & Book Signing
Wednesday, May 14, 2008 • 7 p.m. • FREE
The Duck Store, Upstairs in the Literary Duck

Sign up for the FREE Literary Duck E-Newsletter at UODuckStore.com!



Beautiful, elegant stackable bands to celebrate all of life's moments!

Lots of new styles!

Blue Moon
JEWELRY DESIGNS
115 W 6th Ave
687.7859
M~F 10~6pm Sat 10~5pm

THE DUCK STORE
University of Oregon Bookstore



895 E 13th Ave • 346.4331
UODuckStore.com