

BEST ART TO SEE ON A RAINY DAY

On an afternoon when the rain falls in sheets, the federal Wayne L. Morse Courthouse is a beautiful place for a moment of reflection. Hear me out: Once through the metal detector (no cameras, weapons or trampolines, please), the modern white interior envelops you like a labyrinthian womb with natural light filtering in from huge expanses of windows, creating a lovely glowing effect.

But it's the building's third floor that is truly magical. Hung in three groups is British artist Matthew Ritchie's "Life, Liberty and Pursuit" light-box panels, loosely depicting the history of law and man's entanglement with it, in ink scribbles that look like they were written by a giant's hand, stating "The end of the frontier," "Pursuit of Happiness" and years such as 1215, 1776 and 1954. The artist calls them illuminated murals, but I would say the work is more like a holographic watercolor painting — as you stroll by, the images shift, disappear and reappear. It's almost as if the art is reacting to your presence.



The light these beautiful panels emit on a rainy day — filtered through sage green, gray-blue and soft-brown washes depicting Oregon's mountains, coastline, railroad tracks and logged forests — is nothing short of heavenly. And because of the dark, flat light coming from outdoors when it's overcast, the shimmering artwork reflects brightly off the glass windows, creating the illusion that the art is also hovering in the adjacent courtyard, like ghostly apparitions of Oregon's past. It is a sight to be seen.

PHOTOS BY TODD COOPER