

THE ARTS

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'Big Red' and the art of Christos Koutsouras

By DWIGHT CASWELL
FOR COAST WEEKEND

Christos Koutsouras is passionate about art — a passion that is on display at an exhibit of his recent work at Imogen Gallery.

The show opens during this month's Second Saturday Art Walk in Astoria. It is Imogen's fifth anniversary, and according to owner Teri Sund, "Christos has been a huge part of the gallery since the beginning."

Koutsouras doesn't fit into any school of art. His paintings seem drawn from some realm of the subconscious, yet closely observed and subtly painted. They are, as arts activist Jeremy Efroymsen put it, "suspended in spaces that alternate between chaos and calm."

Born on the Greek island of Samos, the long voyage of Koutsouras' life brought him to the Pacific Northwest, where he moored himself to Astoria's waterfront seven years ago.

Always interested in art, he grew up in a period of Greek history when a military junta controlled the country, when art was less important than just getting by. When he was old enough, he joined the Merchant Marine.

Eight years later he jumped ship and made his way to Berlin, where he enrolled in art school. It was the beginning of a successful international career. Recognized for his discerning use of color, Koutsouras was one of 105 artists from all over the world chosen to create art for the East Side Gallery, an international memorial for freedom consisting of a nearly mile-long section of the Berlin Wall.

Koutsouras left for New York and had multiple exhibitions at the Indianapolis Museum of Contemporary Art. From there, he made his way to Seattle and finally to Astoria.

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SUBMITTED PHOTO

Koutsouras in front of a painting of the Uppertown net shed, aka "Big Red"



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Christos Koutsouras in his studio