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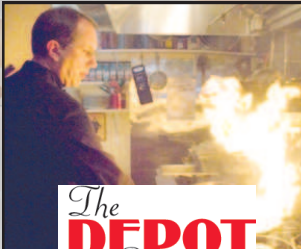
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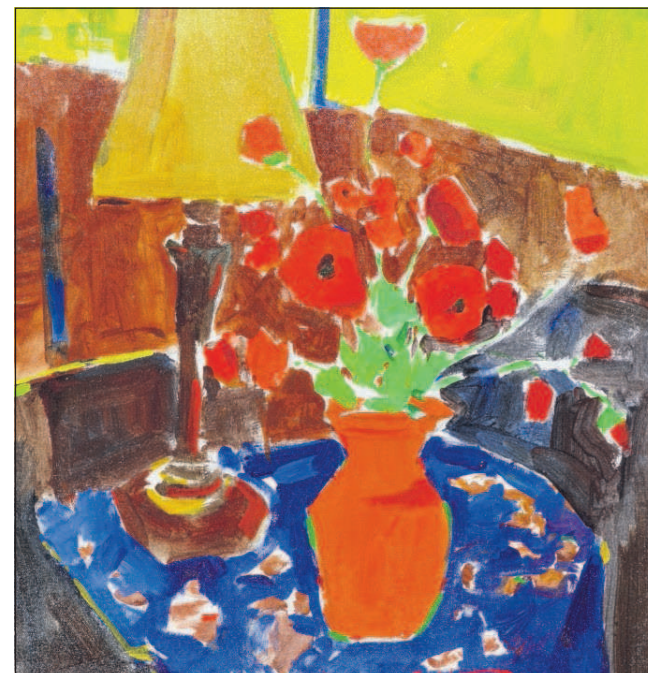
in portrayal. Beyond those skills, Leonardo created stories, emotions and subtle movement on his canvases. He often applied 30 or more layers of thin oil glaze and created depth and subtlety.

Wiegardt paints more like a French Impressionist. He is not a linear painter (he avoids sharp edges), and like those Frenchmen, he rarely uses black (“a black, dead shadow tends to look more like a black hole in our painting rather than a shadow”). He draws definition through a series of brushstrokes using dabs of paint, adroitly laid, one next to another. “Opposite colors juxtaposed energize each other.” He understands that two strokes of complimentary color can create a stronger statement than a flatter, single application of paint. In many respects, Wiegardt is an impressionist.

In his latest book, “Painting without a Net: Thinking Like an Artist,” Wiegardt defines much of his painter’s philosophy in short engaging essays. He introduces his style and the freedom that defines his work or oeuvre. He explains how an artist must remain on the move. How that artist must be open to new ideas and personal growth. Artists may listen to the whims of their patrons, but, ultimately, they must follow their own muse.

Sunrise on the bay

A windy morning in January finds Eric and his father, Dobbie, huddled behind a duck blind on Willapa Bay. When mallards or pintails flutter and then descend into a nest of decoys, the men rise in one unimpeded movement, aim and shoot at the colorful darting birds. Wiegardt came home, not for financial rewards, but because he was drawn to the tidelands of Willapa Bay, to the swollen gray skies and an ever-changing Northwest



COURTESY WIEGARDT STUDIO GALLERY

Eric Wiegardt’s “Blue Tablecloth”

landscape. He remains a master of portraying the racing cloud. Let it also be said, he knows storm. And he loves duck hunting.

Along with his infatuation for the boats, dredges and oyster scows in Nacotta Harbor, Wiegardt finds solace and subject matter in a walk along the shoreline, a trek to Leadbetter State Park, or another along the sandy beaches of the Long Beach Peninsula. He digs clams with a passion, and paints them, too, in shimmering still-life expressions.

A slow-brewing passion defines this artist. Even in his recent excursions into abstraction, he poetically touches upon local time and place, upon the colors and inspiration of Southwest Washington. An observer might find abstract sketches that hint at dawn and dusk on Willapa Bay, at brilliant sunsets descending over the ocean, or at the intense hues of rhododendrons that enhance local landscapes and his paintings. Wiegardt is always at one with nature.

Genius

The word “genius” is overused. Certainly nobody would argue that the word

applies to a Leonardo or Michelangelo, but with many artists, the accolades flow too easily. Perhaps Wiegardt has earned the distinction. His awards and national visibility in the art world might attest to this.

But more appreciated might be the vigor and commitment of this fine, modern-day painter. Wiegardt’s faculty reminds one of a youthful Claude Monet in both passion and distinction. One can be equally impressed by his dedication to painting and his affection for this place we call home.

Make no mistake: Eric Wiegardt is a rare talent, and his painting will ever be a tour de force.

Wiegardt will be the featured artist at Astoria’s RiverSea Gallery beginning with the town’s Second Saturday Art Walk on Feb. 10. His show will run through Tuesday, March 6.

He will have a signing of his recent book, “Painting without a Net: Thinking Like an Artist,” at RiverSea Gallery during the Art Walk.

Another book signing will be held Saturday, March 10, at the Shelburne Inn in Seaview, Washington.