



Eric Wiegardt's "Columbia Pause"

COURTESY WIEGARDT STUDIO GALLERY

CLOSE TO HOME

ERIC WIEGARDT: PAINTING WITHOUT A NET



By **DAVID CAMPICHE**
FOR COAST WEEKEND

Eric Wiegardt must be deemed "local."

Born in Ilwaco, Washington, and sometimes referred to as native, he possesses no more Native ancestry than your average Joe. But like many indigenous people, his persona seems shaped by the bay, rivers and white crystalline sands of the Long Beach Peninsula.

He comes from a family of oystermen. Like his father before him, he retains a love of those tidal wa-

ters — of the arteries and waterways that pulse through Willapa Bay, a four-times-per-day perpetual time clock.

Leonardo da Vinci drew comparisons to the ebb and flow of tidal waters to the veins and arteries of the human body. Not to pigeonhole Wiegardt with such a philosophy, but one can certainly perceive a symbiotic relationship or parallel to the pantheistic love of nature exhibited by the 15th-century master.

A strong Christian — "through my Christian walk, I deeply felt that painting was what God designed me to do," he said — Wiegardt's affection for Willapa Bay remains deep and abiding.

Another comparison to Leonardo is obvious: Wiegardt, too, is a fine painter. A very fine painter. Forfeiting six years of engineering training in Chicago (Lake Michigan didn't begin to match the Pacific Ocean), Wiegardt headed back to school — this time, art school at the American Academy of Art in that same Windy City, training under master and mentor Irving Shapiro. Always, he is encouraged and supported by his wife and partner. Ann has inspired the painter for decades.

Wiegardt is sensitive and attentive. Study his hands and fingers. They are, at once, strong but delicate. When he grips a watercolor brush, and wields it so effortlessly,

some form of creative energy seems to fly around his studio like angel dust. His dedication to attention reaches out nimbly. Curiosity and challenge guide his sense of exploration.

A painter's finesse

Painters are often identified by their deft brushstrokes. Joy is watching Wiegardt handle a paintbrush, watching him lay down paint as if his fingers possess all the dexterity of a Renaissance master.

The artists of the High Renaissance are known for a painting style that was exacting, nearly perfect

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