

Accomplished Artists Impress with Mastery

Written by Michael LoGuidice

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MidCoast Gallery West has works from two accomplished artists on display through the end of February. Bruce Walters has 16 two-dimensional works and Marilyn Davis has 15 porcelain pieces. Both artists demonstrate a mastery over their medium with a high degree of competency.

Marilyn Davis' porcelains are refined shapes that take advantage of porcelain's fine-grained ability to maintain detailed intricate designs. Her work *Love Winter Fan* shows this combination of detailed texture along with controlled glaze to depict a tree devoid of leaves surrounded by a mottled texture reminiscent of melting snow and ice.

The pieces I most liked were more figurative and organic. *Nobori Taki* is a woman with flowing purple hair in the shape of an undulating rectangular jar. I like the combination of whimsy in the rendering of the woman's face, combined with the improbability of the head being attached to a jar. The *Heron Vase* is a very Art Nouveau-like object in which the leaves of the rushes rise around the form of the heron to create the vase.

Davis gives us insight into her craft with her artist's statement: "Porcelain is my primary medium because the pure white clay allows endless color and textural transformations. My inspiration usually comes from nature, travel, reading, and my studies in art history. I utilize both handbuilt and thrown elements, playing on the correspondences between form: organic and geometric, closed and open, symmetrical and asymmetrical, controlled and spontaneous, smooth and textured."

Bruce Walters' *What the Hand Dare Seize the Fire* and *A Choice of Angles series – Reims Cathedral* ink-and-graphite works dominate the gallery space because of their sheer size and dramatic use of light and dark. Each drawing/painting is about four feet wide by seven feet tall. They are well done and draw the gallery visitor toward them.

Once past the two works mentioned above, you can observe Walters' electronic art. *Inn Xanadu* is well described by the artist himself: "I tried to create the feel of a video game, which I think of as

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a new aesthetic. Almost all of the images are from Davenport buildings and streets. That's my hand on the steering wheel. The text is from 'Xanadu,' a poem written by Samuel Coleridge Taylor. Its first line, 'In Xanadu did Kubla Khan stately pleasure dome decree,' is written across the image in neon signs and graffiti. I've also included other elements of the poem – the sacred river Alph, a damsel with a dulcimer, honey-dew, milk of paradise, etc.”

In *Traveler*, an electronic collage of various digital images, the expanse of gray above the wing of the eagle (or hawk), shows Walters' painterly roots. Even though the electronic digital medium cries out for a clutter of images filling the canvas, here the artist goes for compositional simplicity with a single gray tone. It works quite well to silhouette in white the figure of the traveling man.

The *Tall House* might be my favorite work for its magical swirl of twilight escaping from the front door and ascending skyward after circling the house on its way up. Of course, that being said, the artist might tell us that in reality it is a swirl of steam headed downward, but that would ruin the magic that seems to emanate from this digital work.

Almost all of the pieces in this show are priced at or below \$300, which I believe is a bargain given the quality and finish of these works of art. I would recommend checking out this show, especially if this type of artwork might appeal to you, considering the items on display are priced so reasonably.