

Exploring the Landscape, Degree by Degree

Written by Steve Banks

Tuesday, 06 December 2005 18:00

- [Buy Cheap Autodesk AutoCAD Raster Design 2009](#)
- [Buy OEM Siemens Solid Edge ST6 \(64-bit\)](#)
- [Download Microsoft Expression Web 2](#)
- [Discount - Lynda.com - Word 2013 Essential Training](#)
- [Download Lynda.com - Word 2013 Essential Training](#)
- [Buy Smith Micro Poser 7 \(en\)](#)
- [9.95\\$ Lynda.com - Photoshop CS6 Essential Training cheap oem](#)
- [Buy OEM Acala DVD Creator 3](#)
- [Buy Autodesk NavisWorks Review 2009 \(en\)](#)
- [Buy Objective Development Launch Bar 5 MAC \(en\)](#)
- [Buy Cheap Lynda.com - AJAX Essential Training](#)
- [Buy Avanquest PowerDesk Pro 7 \(en\)](#)

If you have not made the time to see 41°/90° at the Figge Museum yet, you have until this weekend to catch an enjoyably diverse group of artists, their explorations with the landscape, and our relationships with it. It is amazing to witness firsthand how unique an artist's response is to the land and how they translate that response through various materials into a visual documentation. This show runs the gamut from precise, detail-oriented works to loose, geometric interpretations, from large, boldly-colored reconstructions of the mind to actual physical earth removed from its original context/location and represented in a new one.

Landscape painting has traditionally been a carefully-measured study laden with romanticism, innuendo and nuance. Appreciation of it is not unlike developing a taste for fine coffee – when one learns to differentiate and appreciate the layers and flavors that can be obtained from different blends of coffee beans and roasting techniques. *41/90* brings together a group of artists whose landscape works interpret and explore modern landscape's broad evolution into a broader range of explorations and interpretations. While some works are rooted in the traditional appreciation for the nuances of the land, other pieces delve into the bold or dynamic or commercial.

Katy Fischer's work, entitled *Drainpipe 1*, is a small, simple (but not easy), crisply-presented image with soft and intricate detail. The intimate piece depicts a highway guardrail composed of three horizontal bands. The center band is packed with visual information, showing the side of an embankment covered with tufts of grass and bushes. Near the center of this band, there is a subdued vertical stroke created by the rocks, chunks of concrete, and concave pipe fragments that sends our eyes to the robust dark patch of the drainpipe jutting out from the berm. The dense texture of the center band plays off the blank openness of the top and bottom bands.

Elements that could give clues to any specifics have been stripped away by Fischer, leaving us with a landscape that is both anonymous and ubiquitous. Her works explore manmade elements and how they attempt to segment, separate, cordon-off, and control, versus nature's subtle, but relentless, drive to expand and reclaim.

Larry Schwarm's massive color photographs portray the landscape as very dynamic and unconvoluted. In Schwarm's piece *Fire Near Cassoday, Kansas*, there is a very simple and

Exploring the Landscape, Degree by Degree

Written by Steve Banks

Tuesday, 06 December 2005 18:00

satisfying dialogue between the elements of earth, wind and fire. He has captured a luminous and magnificent wall of flame moving across the land. Schwarm shows keen compositional awareness in his capturing of lights and darks, and the profound visual opposition found in the diagonal stroke between the orange blaze, the violet night, and the textured landscape below them.

Kathleen Eaton also captures the effects of light on the land. In her piece *Summer Night*, Eaton studies the different types of manmade light (incandescent and fluorescent) as they spill out into a T-intersection of a tree-lined boulevard in a quiet neighborhood. The image has a slight Edward Hopper-esque melancholy to it, especially with its hints of interior spaces, but with a much warmer color palette and visual sensibility.

Local artist and educator Kristin Quinn has two large and boldly-colored landscape-inspired works in the show. In her work *Sky Determines*, Quinn has extracted various landscape elements from their original settings and reassembled them into a layered and constructed space where warm and vibrant lemon-yellows and peaches stand in dynamic contrast to the black silhouettes of a tumultuous tangle of branches, leaves, and flowers. The crisp graphic elements interact with the vital primordial explosions of color masses, drips, and thin tonal washes to subdue selected outlines and color boundaries, creating a new landscape from the elements of the old.

The landscape explorations of Sam Prekop, all untitled, have a more playful feel to them. He describes the landscape with tight rhythms, movements, and dense groupings of lines, squares, and rectangles percolating with pinks, peaches, teals, grays, browns, and rusts. Prekop utilizes a device similar to Katy Fischer's to set up a push/pull dynamic with the visual activity, by reserving the complex visual activity to a focused region – in this instance, the lower half of the image – and balancing it out with large open swaths. Unlike Fischer, who presents a richly detailed view, Prekop has distilled the landscape down to simple forms and interactions in a new and fresh way that is slightly reminiscent of artist Paul Cezanne's work over a hundred years ago.

Heather Mekkelson has two different and outstanding bodies of work on display. Her piece entitled *Property* is composed of 16 thigh-high white pedestals arranged four by four, with one foot by one foot blocks of compressed earth on top coated with wax. She has taken samples of land from different locations, representing different land values and levels of desirability, and then showcased them side by side to re-present and re-examine their intrinsic worth within a new context. These works readily lend themselves to not only being read as topographical views of some large stretch of land – complete with gullies, streams, cliffs and expansive plains – but also reverse skyscrapers where the land is showcased on top.

Her other piece, *Tracking Chicago to Davenport*, is nothing short of stunningly powerful, achieved through crystalline simplicity of form. She has created a series of glyph-like images derived from aerial views of all of the overpasses between her studio in Chicago and Davenport. Obviously, some credit has to go to the Illinois DOT and its engineers for constructing the overpasses to begin with, but the extraordinary part lies in Mekkelson's selection, interpretation, and execution of these pieces. Her pieces investigate the landscape through the filter of human

Exploring the Landscape, Degree by Degree

Written by Steve Banks

Tuesday, 06 December 2005 18:00

activity and perceptions.

41/90 showcases artists who run the spectrum of landscape-derived artwork, from those who explore the unbridled landscape and relate to its mystery, or grandeur, or solemnity, or dynamic processes apart from the interactions of human endeavors, to those who investigate the interactions between humans and the land.