

The Beauty of Fine Art in

On-campus art: More than meets the eye

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Art Review

Busy students often move quickly from class to class or pass through buildings with little attention to the aesthetic designs that surround them. They are unaware of the integral presence of art on campus. Pieces of various shapes and sizes, from professional artists and students alike, can be found scattered throughout the school. Whether or not students are aware of the diversity and history behind the artwork, many visitors do take notice.

"I think one of the things that people notice most about our campus is our beautiful artwork all over the place," says Rob Kelly, vice president of Student Development. "It enhances the experience of our buildings because we get to see the beauty around us."

On campus, art is everywhere. From the walls outside of the Hawks' Nest Bistro to the far corners of the Powell Fine Arts Building, artwork of various techniques and mediums can be found with small plaques explaining their content. The pieces are meant to spruce up the on-campus environment.

Just as the grounds of Seattle University are maintained with a diversity of plants of all colors and types, the interiors of the buildings are equally for the aesthetic and cultural diversity the school attempts to foster. The only way to see whether or not artwork goes beyond "something pretty" and sparks discussion among students is to walk the art-lined halls with open eyes and ears.

The Student Center

Photography is an art medium not utilized to its fullest extent on campus, but Edward Burtynsky's "Shipbreaking #30" (2001) gives the technique strong representation in the Student Center. Hidden in the building's lowest level,

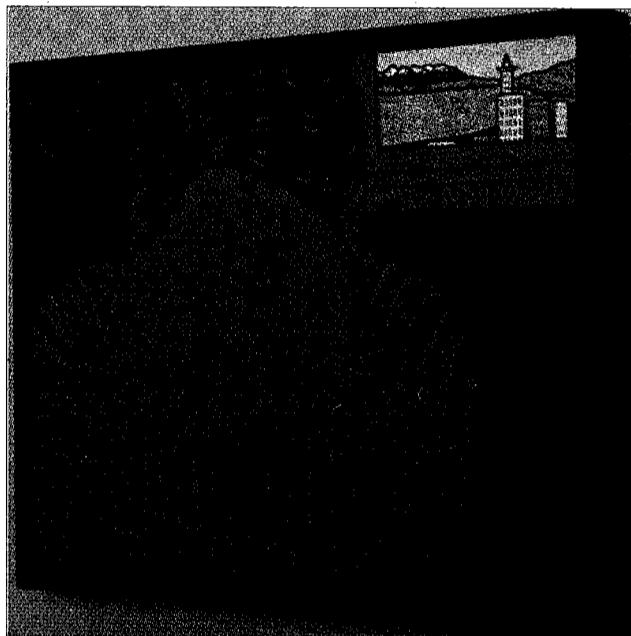
directly across from the entrance to the LeRoux Room, it is unfortunately not seen by as many eyes as some of the less attractive pieces in the building. Though Rob Kelly explained that the pieces in the Student Center rotate from wall to wall, so students walking a particular path everyday will be exposed to "new" pieces, "Shipbreaking #30" has not moved since the 2005-2006 school year began.

The piece is accompanied by a quote from Burtynsky – "Nature transformed through industry is a predominant theme in my work," it begins, and by looking at the piece, it isn't hard to tell why.

In it, the large forgotten corpse of a red, white and blue ship, "Prometheus," sits rusted and dismantled in the mud of Bangladesh. Most of Burtynsky's work focuses on the Bangladeshi reliance on abandoned ships as a source of raw materials for their economy and construction industry, and this piece captures the theme brilliantly – a bleak gray sky above, a dirty brown body of water behind, and a sea of mud beneath, where young children can be seen playing and digging.

On the same wall of the Student Center, 30 yards to the left of "Shipbreaking #30", is a ghastly piece with a prominent display meant more for its message than its content.

It is titled "Seven Social Sacraments," a piece commissioned by Seattle University and created by artist Michael J. Walker in the honor of SU's first director of Campus



Jered Carter/The Spectator

Painting by Roger Shimomura, a local artist, on display in the Student Center.

Ministry, Joseph Maguire. The message behind the image is a powerful one; taking excerpts from one of Maguire's final letters, each square shows a scene with a prominent and socially just historical figure, using a few of Maguire's words to explain the content.

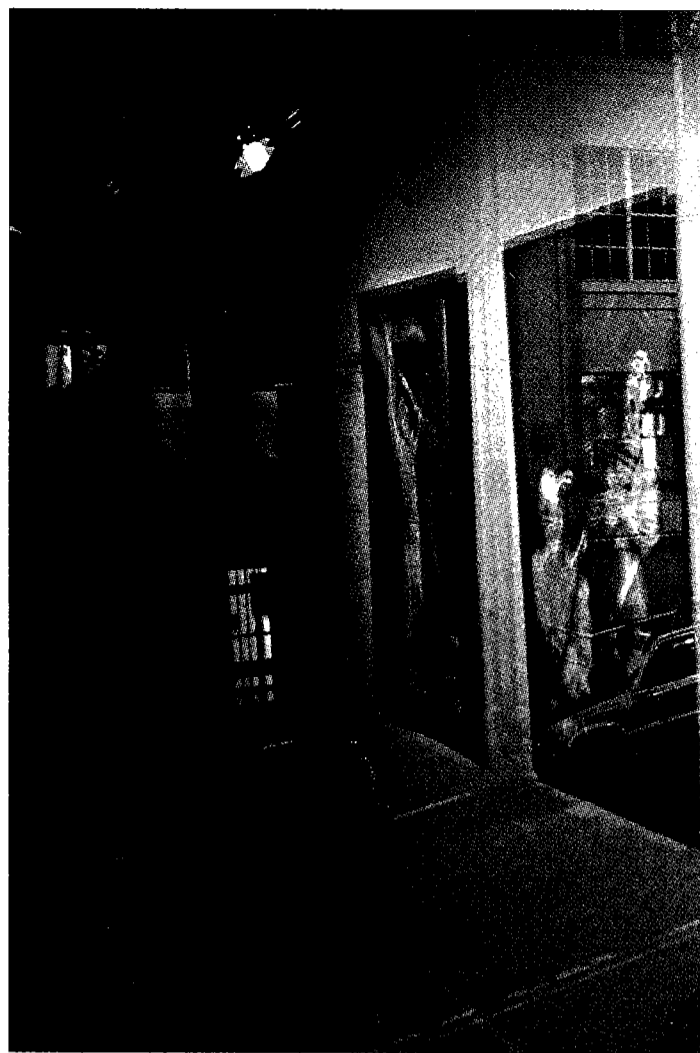
Though it may have been a testament to Maguire's contribution to the school in planning, it is little more than a visual assault in execution. A prominently displayed picture of Jesus shows him as heavyset with the facial characteristics of Coast Salish natives. Though it may have been an homage, Christ's heavyset grinning face can be seen as offensive to Christians and non-Christians alike.

The Lemieux Library

Often overlooked, the upper floors of the Lemieux Library also have some interesting works. One series, "Memories 1-4", is by a 2001 Seattle University graduate named Emily Sherwood. Small and simple, the pieces show photographs (two of fields, two of beaches) that look old – certainly older than a 2001 SU graduate would be – but utilize color well.

One floor above, on the west side of the library's third floor, are two pieces by Fred Machetanz. The works, both of polar bears, are from 1978. The techniques Machetanz uses are very representative of that decade.

Both pieces are oil on canvas, and are nature observation at its simplest. In one, a large polar bear is looking from atop a block of ice towards the viewer as if about the pounce while multiple shades of blue and white make up the full scale of color. In the other, a mother and her cub are seen walking in the late afternoon. Though mostly blue and white, this piece features a sliver of bright yellow in the distance to show the fading hints of an Arctic sunset.



The reflection of art through a window over local scene.

What is art? Ha

Kevin Curley
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The Pioneer Square First Thursday Art Walk is nothing new to the Seattle area. The walk is a time when anyone can see, first hand, how the local art scene is developing. And while the experience this past Thursday was eye-opening, I was left with a little bit of uncertainty, especially when comparing my art to theirs.

The walk provides patrons a chance to freely saunter through Seattle's art world, taking in a conversation with gallery directors while drinking free wine. It's a chance to delve into a mysterious world where artists live in their studios and create what seems like magnificent art pieces on their living room floor.

It is thrilling to see artists struggling to stay afloat, to see their current works in progress. What inspires these artists to succeed is seen through their creations. But what was troubling to me was the lack of photography at the galleries.

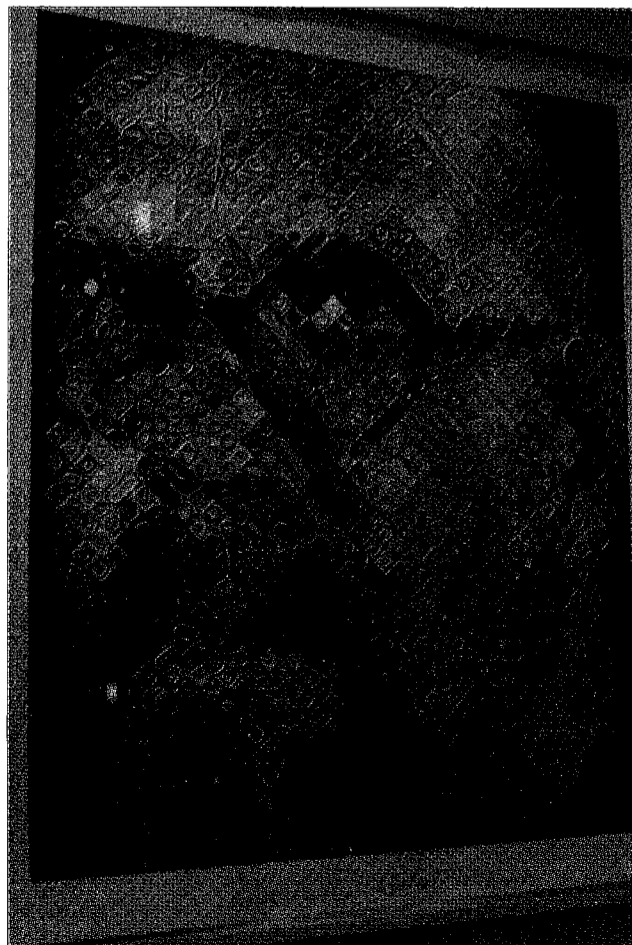
No one seems to get excited anymore about classic photography – no digital contraptions allowed. I'm talking about film cameras, processing the film yourself and spending hours in a darkroom printing the picture you want. It is as though photography is not viewed as art – especially now that the process to create is seen as simple. But can we honestly put our finger on what art is exactly?

There is always the classic BS answer, beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder – however that doesn't get you into a gallery or on someone's wall over their fireplace. No one seems to know the answer, yet those who consider themselves artists seem to think that they are the experts.

For example, take an art class or a photography lesson and you learn that you know nothing about art. You learn that while you think your art is great, your teacher thinks it's crap. You say to yourself, "how did I go from great works of art that were displayed to the world on my mother's fridge in third grade to the trash can 20 years later?"

However, defining the idea of what art is seems ridiculous in the first place. We constantly characterize certain works as good and others as bad simply by glancing at the work and not understanding the artist's intentions. This is why the Art Walk is important, as viewers we can get a glimpse of the artist behind the art.

But for some art historians, great art is associated with great



Jered Carter/The Spectator

Stylized self-portrait by Chuck Close.

Seattle



Kevin Curley/The Spectator

king Pioneer Square last Thursday evening.

is it gone too far?

artists. When I think of great artists I think of Edgar Degas, Pablo Picasso and Claude Monet. For those out there who are photo enthusiasts, like myself, we tend to drop names like Ansel Adams, Walker Evans, Lewis Hine and Dorothea Lange.

But whoever said they were good artists? Someone had to say they were good. Although I enjoyed walking through the artists working spaces on the Art Walk, some artists' work was good and some, like "Bugs, Beer and Art" were just poorly put together.

Don Ehlen, a local entomologist otherwise known as a bug enthusiast, displayed his entire collection of bugs — more than 3,000 different species — in glass cases at Tashiro Kaplan.

Ehlen's bug gallery, *Insect Safari*, was uniquely modern, but was associated with art that did not celebrate the importance of insects to our ecosystem. Instead, the artworks were created by tearing apart and putting back together different bug species. While his art or presentation is typically displayed as a show-and-tell for children

— more of a learning environment than an artistic display — in this case, it was accompanied by local artists to spice up the display. It was a concept that could have worked, but it didn't.

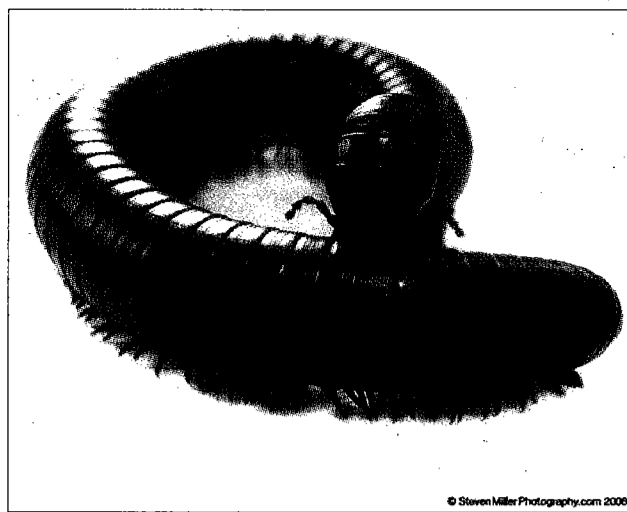
While Ehlen's *Safari* was fascinating, the accompanying creations were disturbing. The supposed insects were bits and pieces of well-preserved insects.

For example, there was one that was the head of a beetle, the wings of a butterfly and the tail of a dragonfly — and it was for sale.

How can this be considered art? Who in their right mind condones the pulling apart of insects, purely for the enjoyment of gluing them in a new and exciting way? That, people, is how the art world works. While I may have thought that the exhibit was awful, there were many people there who were fascinated by the display — or at least enjoyed the alcohol.

Unfortunately this is the hallmark case in regards to our all-encompassing art world. When it comes to art, anyone and everyone is a great artist — in their own mind. And while there are many great artists out there, the chance of actually finding one is rare.

What seems to work one day is out of style the next. And while the works of Ansel Adams continues to draw audiences, my work which has his type of feel will probably never draw an audience. The big movement in the photo world is snap-shot photography. So instead of buying a really expensive digital camera, you could be the next Ansel Adams with your \$1.85 Kodak one-time disposable camera.



© Steven Miller Photography.com 2006

A piece from Don Ehlen's *Insect Safari* (above) at last week's Pioneer Square Art Walk. It was part of an art exhibit that featured his collection of over 3,000 different insects.

Dedicated art connoisseurs wandered the halls of an art gallery last Thursday (right). The Pioneer Square Art Walk has remained a staple of the local art scene and one of the most popular events to catch new and emerging artwork.

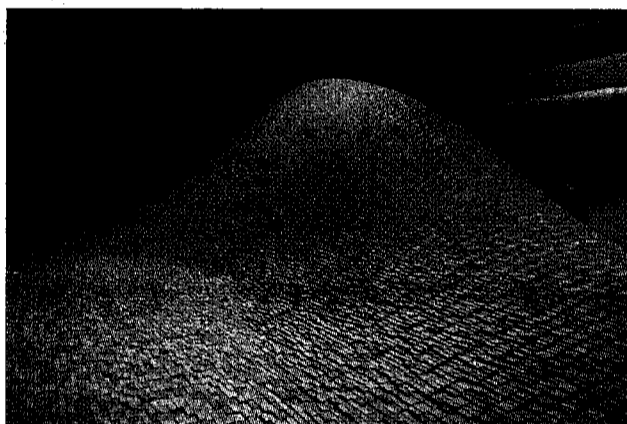


Kevin Curley/The Spectator

Two local galleries offer free exhibits

Henry Art Gallery

Frye Art Gallery



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Just a bus or car ride from Seattle University, the Henry Art Gallery is must-see for any art fan, connoisseur or casual visitor. Located on the western edge of the University of Washington campus, the Henry Art Gallery is Seattle's leading museum in modern art. Its exhibits always feature creative and elaborative pieces that challenge the viewer. The gallery is free for all college students, regardless of school, and allows visitors to experience a wealth of artistic vision.

The current featured exhibit is by Maya Lin. *Systematic Landscapes*, which runs through September 3, includes three large installations. "2x4" (pictured above) is an amazing sight. Comprised of over 64,000 wooden boards, it can be seen as a hillside resembling an ancient Middle Eastern town or an Italian villa. Another work, "Water Lines," is a wire installation which recreates an actual underwater formation.

Along with these and other works, *Systematic Landscapes* shows the artistic beauty found naturally throughout the world. Lin takes natural beauty and combines it with her love for architecture, creating vivid recreations of Earth.

Lin's best-known work is large, on-site artworks, including both the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, DC and the Civil Rights Memorial in Alabama. She is a highly celebrated artist, receiving critical acclaim and awards over the past quarter century. She was named one of "35 Who Made a Difference" by the Smithsonian in 2005 and a film about her, *Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision*, won an Academy Award for "Best Documentary" in 1996.

Besides *Systematic Landscapes*, The Henry Art Gallery also features smaller exhibits, such as *Empty Space* which explores whether spaces absent of humans still have meaning. This exhibit runs through this Sunday, May 14.

The Henry Art Gallery
15th Avenue NE & NE 41st Street

Hours:

11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Wednesday, Friday-Sunday
11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Thursday

Cost:

Free for Students/\$10 general admission

Located only a few short blocks from SU, the Frye takes you a world away. Through its blend of modern art and classical paintings, the Frye provides unique perspective to visitors. Uncharacteristically bright and welcoming, the gallery does its part to demystify the art culture.

Always free to the public, the Frye has a lot to offer. With its large gallery and huge collection, the gallery creates an encompassing view of many different art styles.

The simplicity of Robyn O'Neill's exhibit underlies her message. The whole exhibit is comprised of different drawings made by a simple pencil, such as "As Ye the Sinister" (pictured below). However, these are not shallow pieces, but in-depth commentaries on the state of our culture and the ultimate moral and ethical questions we all face. Some drawings are graphic and dark while others show the love that exists throughout humanity. This exhibit will run through July 30.

Contrasting Robyn O'Neill is Amy Hefland's *Modern Nature*. A bright exhibit featuring a long rug that encourages you to walk upon it. Unlike the restrictiveness of many galleries, being asked to actually walk upon an artwork is a nice change. Hefland's imaginative landscapes are easy on the eyes and help to expand your creative thoughts.



The second of part of the *Spectatorship & Desire* exhibit is *Loss*. The exhibit looks at the typical art relationship of the visitor as the "spectator" and the artwork as being "desired." Each part of the three-piece exhibit deals specifically with a different emotion. *Loss* "explores the idea that the painting one loves is as much a construction of memory and desire as it is a response to the direct encounter between a viewing subject and a viewed art object."

Whether you feel like the challenge of modern art or the beauty of traditional paintings, the Frye offers a visitor all of that under one roof for no charge.

Frye Art Museum
704 Terry Avenue

Hours:

10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Wednesday, Friday-Saturday
10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Wednesday, 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday

Cost:

Always Free