



present

visual magic

HAND MADE PICTURES

September 25 - November 13, 2015



76 x 112 inches



featuring

Jay Backstrand Leigh Behnke Sharon Bronzan Jerry Brown Jon Jay Cruson Don Eddy Biff Elrod George D Green Jeri Hise George Johanson Connie Kiener Nancy Lindburg Terry Melton Paula Overbay Lucinda Parker Hugh Webb

On behalf of the George D Green Art Institute Board of Directors, I would like to thank Mary Vinton Folberg, Annie Painter, Debbie Hutchins, Alex Hill and the rest of the team from Northwest Academy for hosting the first of our Traveling Art Exhibitions. We will take exhibitions of world-class art to communities around the State of Oregon so that students can have access to an art experience that includes the exhibition and interaction with some of the artists who made the work. We want these students to be exposed to the creativity process that these artists use in making their pictures, so they will be inspired and stimulated by what they see and hear. We want to ignite their imagination through the exposure to Art, to learn what Artists do and what they contribute to society. We're concerned that our students are missing out on a variety of important art educational opportunities due to the cuts in school budgets, and that's why our Traveling Art Exhibitions are so important.

I would also like to thank Nels Hall, of Yost Grube Hall, Architects, with the assistance of Phil Beecher, of Beecher Electric, in the transformation of the Academy's space into a professional gallery. The beauty of the design is that it can be removed and then reused for future art exhibition programs.

And finally, I would like to thank you, the supporters of Northwest Academy, which is an important and vibrant Portland educational institution. Please enjoy the exhibition.

- Dan Biggs

Chairman of the Board, George D. Green Art Institute Northwest Academy is delighted to host the first showing of "visual magic" and to welcome the George D Green Institute to our school. This opportunity for our students and constituents to view extraordinary works of art, created by world-class artists, is representative of our core values and teaching philosophy at the Academy. We hope you will all return many times over the years to this very unique school for other wonderful exhibits and performances by our talented students, faculty and friends.

- Mary Vinton Folberg

Head of School, Northwest Academy When I was a boy my interests were intense and focused. I liked to play sports and make pictures. The small college town in which I was raised provided plenty of opportunities to play and watch sports, but few to make or watch pictures.

Our Institute was founded in part as a corrective to the picture barren circumstance of my youth. Our mission, in outline, is to offer people an opportunity to see real pictures (in many cases unlike anything before seen). This will occur through a series of small shows in various communities far from the museum and gallery rich urban centers where art is typically shown.

The pictures were mostly mine, but it soon occurred to me that I have several life long friends who are among our best painters, in some instances historically world renown. Why not see if any would loan a picture to such an exhibition? Happily, many agreed and this eclectic exhibition of amazing pictures is the result. It's impressive to see how grand an idea can become as a consequence of the enthusiastic collaboration of creative people.

- George D Green

Essay – Danielle Knapp McCosh Associate Curator Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art

The works included in "visual magic" are beautiful. They transfix. Bewilder. Delight. More importantly they are original manifestations of deeply realized personal visions. In some instances, they are unlike anything ever seen before. This is an eclectic group of painters (many of whom also work in other media) all doing the best work of their careers, and doing so by hand. Though their imagery and approaches are diverse, they share a dedication to creating work that is meaningful and authentic, rather than strictly ascribing to any guiding principles of contemporary art theory. Most have been steadfastly working in one highly personal and well-developed mode for decades, without allowing the distractions of external trends in the arts to affect their own work.

On the heels of postmodernism and post-postmodernism, there is still a certain taboo associated with a return to all those markers of traditional art against which the twentieth century's modernism rebelled. Realism has long been a font for appropriation and reinvention—but representational art for representational art's sake? It has and continues to often be met with skepticism or disinterest. "visual magic" confronts this status quo and presents sixteen artists (based in either New York or Oregon) whose work of the past several decades may be recognized as harbingers of a new avant garde-ism in which the "old fashioned" becomes the "new fangled."

George Johanson, properly acknowledged as the dean of Portland painters, spent three years (1950–1953) after his education at Portland's Museum Art School (now the Pacific Northwest College of Art) working in NYC and hanging out at Greenwich Village's legendary Cedar Tavern. Here he came to know the members of the New York School. As a near missed coincidence, just a few years later a teenage Louis Meisel (now a prominent New York gallerist, Meisel coined the term "photorealism" in 1969) frequently snuck into the bar in hopes of also meeting these artists.¹

At mid-century, Johanson's own work showed the heavy influence of Abstract Expressionism, yet he never completely abandoned representational elements. Figures returned in large number in the paintings of the 1970s, a practice that continues to this day as he populates his surrealistic landscapes from life with appearances by artist-friends, family members, figures from old photographs, and cats and dogs. In the decades since Johanson's permanent return to Oregon, he has cemented his legacy in the state. His new work is conspicuous for its palette of intense and unusual color, and although the experience of New York remains influential, his oeuvre is uniquely rooted in the Portland art scene.

¹ Meisel was ultimately successful, He crossed paths with Franz Kline and Willem de Kooning and established friendships with Theodoros Stamos and, years later, Mark Rothko, who eventually hired Meisel to pick up his art supplies and paid him with artwork. For a complete history, see Richard Polsky, The Art Prophets: The Artists, Dealers, and Tastemakers Who Shook the Art World (New York City: Other Press, 2011).

George Green (Portland/NYC) launched his career in New York City over three decades ago as he developed a distinct style that is now known as "Abstract Illusionism," described in Henry Sayre's A World of Art as "characterized by images of abstract sculptural forms that seemed to float free of the painting's surface in highly illusionistic three dimensional space."² As one of the genre's originators, Green pushes the time-honored practices of trompe l'oeil and forced perspective to new possibilities. The combination of a dreamlike, photorealist seascape or coastline, coupled with unanticipated elements of shape, color, and line–an "alchemy of opposites," as Green has called it–is enhanced further with the additions of illusionistic frames or even pieces of tape that are painted so convincingly the viewer's very understanding of reality is momentarily unsettled.

Don Eddy (NYC), despite his role as one of the originators of Photorealism, self identifies as a "spiritual realist." New York critic Donald Kuspit writes "Eddy's technique of making a painting is in and of itself a spiritual demonstration."³ Eddy, like Chuck Close (also one of the cofounders of the genre), has evolved in spectacular, personal, and innovative ways. He currently paints predominantly in triptychs. There are no human figures: rather, Eddy makes the physical locations the stars of their own stories. The slightly surreal city scapes indicate time moving cyclically rather than linearly. But, despite the absence of human forms, their presence is well-indicated. These are not abandoned places. High-rises' windows are lit. Friezes appear freshly carved. Cars dot the roadways.

Conceptually, there is a connection to Lucinda Parker (Portland)'s striking large-scale charcoal drawing, Ramifications (All Life; All Animals; All Plants), which engages viewers in an exploration of the phylogenetic tree of life—another acknowledgement of humanity's intersection with the passages of time. Well-known for the intense and sometimes startling palette of her paintings, Parker (whom art writer Sue Taylor has called "among the most admired painters in this region"⁴) works just as successfully in black and white. This drawing, not unlike her painterly representations of the mountainous landmarks of the Northwest, reminds viewers of the ever-changing reality of the biological and geographical structure that determines all life.

In her book about Leigh Behnke (NYC), art historian Leda Cempellin writes, "Although she makes use of reference photos for her paintings, it is clear that she cannot be fully considered a hyperrealist...she concentrates on what is depicted on the canvas in a more traditional Renaissance way."⁵ Behnke is distinctive in her deep-seated interest in structure, citing the mathematical implications of the work of both Archimedes and M.C. Esher as influences on her approach to pattern and form. Architecture, not surprisingly, is a central theme.

Jerry Foster Brown (NYC)'s digital manipulations from late in his life also took the man made and ubiquitous as a font of inspiration. His images of city streets, in which the cracks have been reinterpreted as opportunities for color and energy, remove the subject matter from its original context and present it as pure, unfettered line.

² Henry Sayre, A World of Art, 8th edition (London: Laurence King Publishing Ltd., 2015), 28.

³ Donald Kuspit, The Art of Paradox: Don Eddy (Hudson Hills Press: NY, 2002), 7.

Sue Taylor, "Lucinda Parker, Portland, at Laura Russo" (exhibition review), Art in America 102 Issue 4,
April 23, 2014, accessed August 18, 2015, www.artinamericamagazine.com/reviews/lucinda-parker.

⁵ Leda Cempellin, Leigh Behnke: Real Spaces, Imagined Lives (Padova, Italy: CLEUP; 2005), 23.

Looking to the past and across cultural lines has stimulated these artists in myriad ways. Jeri Hise (Portland/NYC)'s early love of Rembrandt and her prodigious research skills (developed at her alma mater Smith College and during weekly visits to the Metropolitan Museum of Art) now manifest in canvases that reach across boundaries of culture, geography, and time. Though the individual components of each vignette initially appear to be direct reproductions of masterworks from western art history (albeit on a gigantic scale), a second look reveals the careful adjustments she has made to the source material as she thinks of each part in the greater context of the whole.

These interests are seen in the work of others in this exhibition, though interpreted in different ways – notably, Jay Backstrand (Portland)'s assemblages of images that both excite the eye and intellect and raise questions about perceived (or overtly suggested) connections between images. Much like Hise, Backstrand's paintings play unexpected elements off of one another. The image-within-image effect of Doing the Dance II is exemplary of Backstrand's ability to consider both the intellectual context and the aesthetic possibilities of items from his visual grab-bag, while adjusting scale and perspective to create optical tension.

Biff Elrod (NYC) has provided yet another option for viewers to contemplate multiple images in one composition, as seen in Melody Metaphor. His paintings draw from photographic images that have been superimposed in a high-contrast palette. The overlay gives movement to the images, rightfully referencing the influence of cinematic film stills, without imposing a pre-defined narrative.

Connie Kiener (Portland)'s ceramic tiles, vessels, and sculpted busts are the products of her long-invested interest in the Maiolica tradition. This Renaissance technique of in-glaze, low-fired painted pottery, known for its vibrant colors on white surfaces. The diverse imagery immediately evokes her inspiration, the themes she calls her "visual vocabulary:" universality, nature, mortality, motion, and feminism.⁶ She has developed her working style beyond the technique's historical roots, and eschewed the limited palette of its bygone period in favor of a broader collection of colors.

Sharon Bronzan (Portland) is a painter of imagined figures, for whom she devotes weeks fully realizing in layers of gouache. The comparisons between her fresh, contemporary visions and the ancient tradition of religious icon-writing are not unexpected, given the poses, characteristic flatness, and luminosity that define both. "There is something almost transcendent about iconographic work and it just captures my attention," she has said.⁷ However, Bronzan's works draw from diverse influences, including her own lush garden in Portland, Mexican folk art, and the tradition of santos, wood-carved images of Catholic saints from Latin America. They effectively bridge the past and the present.

There is a sense of music and virtuosity in this gathering of works – a respect of pattern, rhythm, and interconnectedness among disparate parts. This sensitivity is evident in the lusciously textured surface of Hugh Webb (McMinnville)'s fish in Zimmerman. Much of Webb's work is about seeking improbable juxtapositions–flirting with absurdity and frequently crossing the line. As he says, "I refuse

⁶ Connie Kiener, e-mail message to author, August 17, 2015.

⁷ KC Cowan, producer, "Sharon Bronzan," Oregon Art Beat, Oregon Public Broadcasting, published Aug. 3, 2006, accessed August 20, 2015, www.opb.org/television/programs/artbeat/segment/sharon-bronzan-739.

to acknowledge my age. I am relying more and more on my 14-year old humor; seeking a rationale for stupid as a way to dodge certain realities."⁸

Likewise, the large canvas Odyssey by Nancy Lindburg (Salem), an artist chiefly concerned with what she has called "order under appearances," provides a rich sensation of color and depth, which appears deceptively simple at first glance and slowly rewards its viewers with a profound and contemplative visual experience.

Paula Overbay (NYC), an alumna of the Pacific Northwest College of Art, lived in Portland until relocating to Brooklyn in 1997, and her Oregonian experience still shapes the work that she completes cross-country. Citing clouds and "nature at a cellular level: molecules as a metaphor" as her starting points, Overbay's images reduce–or expand?–the most simple of building blocks to colored, geometric wonders.

Jon Jay Cruson (Eugene), who earned his MFA at the University of Oregon while studying under Eugene master painters David McCosh, Andrew Vincent, and Jack Wilkinson, has painted for extensive periods on the Oregon Coast since the 1970s. Time spent by the sea stimulated his experimentation with different materials and print making processes. Based in Eugene since 1975, Cruson creates work that reflects both his life events and his intimate knowledge of the open landscapes and vast skies of the West. The Country Side beautifully illustrates the results of that inspiration and shows viewers Cruson's command of color.

The eye can rest in the sophisticated line drawings and powerful serigraphs of desert formations of Terry Melton. His long career as a distinguished arts administrator, artist, and poet is remarkable in its diversity and intensity. The inherent balance and the confident movement of the lines in the pair of Sobra la Mesa serigraphs (from a series of 10 prints) are not so far removed from the larger, more highly detailed works by the other artists on view.

The combined effect of the work of these sixteen artists, exhibited here together for the first time ever, cannot be understated. Although their individual stories are compelling, explanations of the artists' motivations or imagery are not necessary in order for viewers to enjoy a meaningful experience with these art objects. This magic is accomplished through the sheer potency of the works.

- Danielle Knapp

McCosh Associate Curator Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art

⁸

George Green, e-mail message to author, August 25, 2015.







Doing the Dance II

33 x 38.5 inches

oil on canvas

Jay Backstrand 2010





Leigh Behnke 2008

Melody Metaphor

50 x 68 inch

oil on canvas

Biff Elrod 2014





Kit Kat

17.5 x 14.5 inches

Sharon Bronzan 2014

The Country Side





Odyssey 48 x 36 inches acrylic on canvas

Nancy Lindburg 2009



Yellow Moon 9 x 9 inches

acrylic on paper

Paula Overbay 2014







The Road Show I 17.5 x 21.5 inches digital photography Jerry Foster Brown 2005

The Road Show II 17.5 x 21.5 inches digital photography Jerry Foster Brown 2005



Sobre la mesa-a 11 x 14 inches serigraph Terry Melton 2007

From a portfolio edition of 10 serigraphs





Sobre la mesa-b 11 x 14 inches serigraph Terry Melton 2007



The Infinity Machine: Winter Sun

48 x 80 inches

acrylic on panel

George D Green 2015





Face of Things II

31.75 x 8.5 x 4.75 inches

maiolica ceramic

Connie Kiener 2014

Writer Light 60 x 36 inches

acrylic on canvas

Don Eddy 2015



laurarusso.com

Jay Backstrand

Laura Russo Gallery: Portland, OR

Art is what I do to survive.

Leigh Behnke

Fischbach Gallery: NYC Plus One Gallery: London fischbachgallery.com plusonegallery.com

Of Spirals and Floating Bodies

Macro forms of the spiral like wormholes and spinning spiral galaxies have echo structures mirrored by the fractal growth pattern of plants or shells (the nautilus comes to mind). If we drill down we find this pattern presented in microcosms like the cellular structures of DNA. Another format would be shapes created by Mandelbrot sets, which exist only as extensions of algorithms. Indeed, Archimedes worked on the mathematical properties of the spiral in 225 BC and the research has never slowed down.

Spirals, arches, parabolic curves, and a multitude of other geometric constructions have found their way into the formats of my paintings. They serve me, as they serve other users, as a way to structure a very specific and unique image while imbuing it with a sense of something more grand and universal.

Ore Rotundo/ Escher's Eye translates as "with loud resounding voice," or literally "with a round mouth." My reference to Escher is to the mathematical art of M.C. Escher, and to the more elliptical and poetic entomological sense of a round mouth as a circle, an opening.

Sharon Bronzan

Augen Gallery: Portland, Oregon

augengallery.com

I paint solitary, iconic figures. The narratives in my paintings reflect my interest in historical and contemporary traditions and myths. Recently, I have been intrigued by the connection between faith and luck, exploring the role of hope in everyday existence.

Jerry Foster Brown

Jerry Foster Brown was a New York painter with Oregon roots. Though he was exceptionally talented and his work widely collected, he infrequently exhibited.

After a diagnosis of terminal cancer at age 60, he stopped painting and worked virtually non-stop for his last three years on a series of powerful digital photos.

Jon Jay Cruson

White Lotus Gallery: Eugene, OR Zeek Gallery: Salem, OR

wlotus.com marylouzeekgallery.com

For the past number of years I have taken many short trips to northeastern Oregon, southeastern Washington and northern California. There I rediscovered the vast space, clear skies and landscapes. The open country, patterns, shapes, colors, they are all there. Back in the studio, it all comes together with the play of the elements, transferring, assembling, and incorporating them in their own particular way.

Don Eddy

Nancy Hoffman Gallery: NYC

nancyhoffmangallery.com doneddy.com

Several years ago I was reading a novel titled The Historian when I encountered a passage that seemed to come from the same set of insights that are at the foundation of my current work. The central male character in the novel talks about taking a train from Istanbul to Budapest in the early 1900s. He reflects on how the landscape and culture change as the the train moves north. He marvels that 'the landscape itself seemed saturated with history.' I was struck by that observation and mesmerized by the word 'saturated'. It occurred to me that those few sentences in the novel captured a small piece of a larger experience. It is not just that 'the landscape is saturated in history', but more globally every place is saturated with every other place. Every time is saturated with every other time. Every thing is saturated with every other thing. Further, one can sense place infused not with just one moment in time and history, but saturated with Time itself. Place, Time, and Phenomena, become living dynamic entities of which any place, time or phenomena is only a localized instance.

Something like this is at the heart of my current work. My experience is that every place, time, and thing seem to echo the heartbeat (even the heartbreak) of every other place, time and thing. Every place summons up the ghosts of each and every instance of history in that and other places. The world abounds in 'echo structures', never issuing one sound, but a wealth of echoes through time, place, and phenomena. And any moment in time seems like a small and contained room in which the floor and ceiling have dropped away revealing Everything echoing Everything: Past, Present, and Future. My current work grows out of these insights. It is a celebration of Ontological mystery.

biffelrod.com

Biff Elrod

Dealer: Donna Leatherman LLC 780 Madison Avenue, Suite 4a NY NY 10065 Cell#: 917-273-2921

For a number of years now, my primary interest has been in the development of paintings composed from several images presented simultaneously in superimposition, to produce a third combined image. Superimposed images, sometimes produced as a novelty in cinema and photography–or by accident, when one frame of film was exposed twice from different sources–have been familiar for some time. However, in my view, their expressive and communicative potential has not been sufficiently explored in painting.

The constituent images that I use tend to be intuitively selected, and each has been culled from personal photos and found images. Selections for the different image layers will likely have some personal significance before I manipulate them to be suitable for the painting. It is my general intention that as images overlap, with varying degrees of transparency, they reveal a new, largely unexpected and evolved resultant image. Also that each of these source images continue to hold a degree of autonomy and definition even as they form the overall conglomerate.

The hopeful result is that in the process of deciphering the finished painting, a viewer will follow contours or intersections of images, and switch from one overlapped image to the other, perhaps simulating and provoking a simple stop frame animation and/or intended poetic association. This approach presents the possibility of an image structure that is both literal and abstract, iconoclastic and associative. Most importantly, this is not photography or graphics, it is painting, which has always evidenced the possibility of an irreplaceable personal touch, and signature visual philosophy.

George D Green

Louis K Meisel Gallery: NYC Bernarducci.Meisel.Gallery: NYC meiselgallery.com bernarduccimeisel.com georgedgreen.com georgedgreenartinstitute.com

I know something about pictures-not so much about art, despite being frequently misidentified as an artist.

In looking back over the many hundreds of pictures I've painted, a few things stand out. I like visually robust exuberance, illusionistic space and heartbreaking-cornball-romanticism. Sometimes this alchemy of opposites produces an enchantment much like the science of the angels–a picture worth watching.

Jeri Hise

Augen Gallery: Portland, Oregon

augengallery.com georgedgreenartinstitute.com

These paintings draw from our shared art historical past and my own personal narrative. They are oxymoronically both old fashioned and new fangled. Slamming these disparate images together in juxtaposition creates new, multi-dimensional layers of insight and mysterious meaning, simultaneously. Each image separately carries its own aesthetic charge, but when placed together a new and entirely different energy is created.

George Johanson

Augen Gallery: Portland, Oregon

augengallery.com johansonfinearts.com

My work draws on many sources: personal experiences, dreams, travel, and references to the artwork of others. Human activity of all kinds interests me.

Drawing is always the foundation of my work, but the emotive power of color interests me more and more.

Connie Kiener

Laura Russo Gallery: Portland, Oregon

laurarusso.com conniekienertileart.com

This body of work addresses heraldry, which to my imagination is a visual metaphor and format that can be translated to pretty much everything that goes on in the universe. Within the forces of nature there is a kind of banding together that occurs and an inevitable hierarchy that often requires some form of protection (whether conscious or not) to continue its existence.

Nancy Lindburg

Mary Lou Zeek Gallery, Salem, Oregon

marylouzeekgallery.com georgegreenartinstitute.com

My work is about ideas and solving the problems that are generated by them. It is about everything I care about–whether it be color, surface texture, pattern, light, space, energy, nature, silence, hope. It is about order under appearances.

Terry Melton

georgegreenartinstitute.com

I paint, I write, and remain fascinated after many years of making images and arguing with words that I'm still engaged in such things. I have yet to unriddle the several mysteries of paint or the multiple false starts that surround short prose and even shorter poetry. I've unraveled a few things. But as adventure has it there remains unrelentingly, and sometimes unforgivingly, another enigma to chase.

It's the stuff that makes painters paint, writers write.

Paula Overbay

Muriel Guepin Gallery: NYC

murielguepingallery.com paulaoverbay.com

The interior energy of clouds has been a theme that I return to again and again. It could be that living in Oregon for the bigger share of my life and witnessing cloud banks, fog, drizzle and downpours for months on end has given me an edge into the semi-translucent quality of those illusive things. I have been hiking under them when they were gray mist, blurred edges and halos. The end of a shower meant the landscape would be washed clean with shimmering air and the surfaces drenched in color from sunlight. I sensed the idea if not quite the visibility of rain molecules filling the air around me.

Lucinda Parker

Laura Russo Gallery: Portland, OR

laurarusso.com

I am a painter with constant interest in bold structure, strong shapes and vigorous gesture.

Ramifications (All life; All Animals; All Plants) is a suite of charcoal drawings about the phylogenetic reorganization of the tree of life. Scientists have been researching the genetic links between living creatures for years. Older versions of the tree of life were morphological; still older were religion based. The ancient roots of the new structure are still hazy, befitting the origin of life. "All Plants" and "All Animals" are subsections of "All Life" with an attempt at schematic proportions, and the whole body of knowledge is in motion all the time.

Hugh Webb

hughwebbart.com

I remember an artist friend telling the story of how amazed he was at age 14 to learn how jazz was played. "You mean they make it up as they go?" Another jazz related story tells of Miles Davis saying "Never play anything straight". Those and a few other like-minded role models have served to form my approach to art making regardless of Academia's attempts to require performance standards. Since retiring from Academia, it has been full steam ahead playing around with improvisation and having a helluva good time.



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Don Eddy 2015