

ART

Marrying Tradition, Technology

Alan Singer's 'Cosmology' at Redhouse a successful balance

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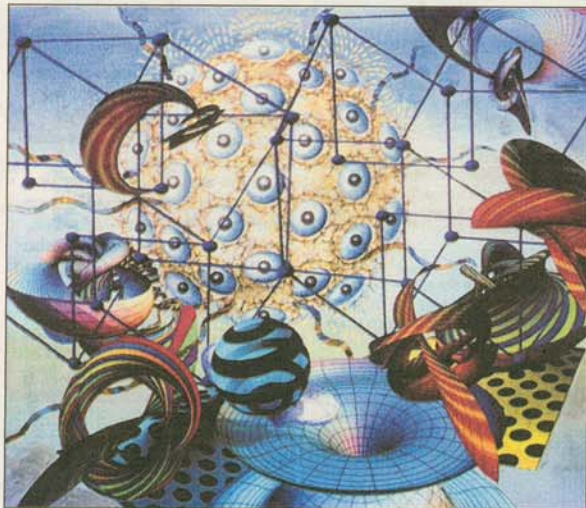
New technologies can be misguided companions for some artists. The risk is that the novelty of the technology

overpowers the quality of the artistic expression. The bells and whistles of some new digital programs assume a lopsided dominance, with the visual aesthetic relegated to a secondary role. In the passion of the moment, one can lose one's way.

That's not the case with the mixed media pieces of Rochester-based artist Alan Singer. The artist effectively blends and balances the traditional medium of watercolor with digital imagery creating intensely colorful and graphically complex monoprints.

Through Nov. 8, a small, but solid exhibition of Singer's recent works remains on view in the Joan Lukas Rothenberg Gallery at Redhouse. There are 11 watercolor and digital transfer monoprints and four oil on linen paintings in the exhibition curiously titled "Cosmology: Paintings and Drawings by Alan Singer." He completed most of the work over the past year or so, but there are a couple of earlier pieces, which show how his style has evolved over the past four years. As a side note, Singer spent most of his career painting vividly representational landscapes and still lifes in watercolor.

The most obvious change in the most recent work lies in the complexity of the compositions. Singer's most recent prints are loaded with organic shapes, which allude to many things but commit to nothing specific. Dark profiles, bulging eyeballs and rooftop sirens float in suggestions of landscapes, cityscapes



Courtesy of Redhouse

IN "INTO THE CRUCIBLE, 2007," Singer creates a strong sense of depth within a two-dimensional surface. He layers digital imagery with drawing and watercolor techniques to create these monoprints.

The strength of virtually all of the prints resides in Singer's ability to play one medium off the other so they harmonize rather than conflict with one another.

and seascapes. Horizon lines cut through the imagery, providing us with something in to which we can sink our teeth.

The strength of virtually all of the prints resides in Singer's ability to play one medium off the other so they harmonize rather than conflict with one another. In pieces such as "Parade Grounds, 2006," and "Isle of

Light, 2007," soft blooms of watercolor act as a supportive layer to the harder-edged digital imagery. Singer uses the watercolor because it provides him with an effect he could not readily achieve through digital imagery.

He also, on occasion, utilizes an implied grid to organize many of these compositions. Sometimes the grid takes on the form of a honeycomb, ("66th Horizon, 2006") in other instances it's a zigzag of dots and squares ("Bury the Bullets, 2006"), some reference textile patterns ("Beach Comber, 2007"). At times, the pattern anchors the background and sometimes it floats in the foreground.

As you try to decipher Singer's strikingly surreal images, you're apt to be struck by the incredible pictorial depth he achieves within a two-dimensional surface. In pieces such as "Parade Grounds, 2006," Sing-



Courtesy of Redhouse

ROCHESTER-BASED artist Alan Singer exhibits a series of watercolor and digital transfer monoprints and oil paintings at Redhouse through Nov. 8. He titles this print "Parade Grounds, 2006."

If you go

What: "Cosmology: Paintings & Drawings by Alan Singer."
Where: Joan Lukas Rothenberg Gallery at Redhouse, 201 S. West St., Syracuse.
When: Through Nov. 8.
What to expect: Watercolor and digital transfer monoprints and oil paintings.
Hours: Noon to 5 p.m. Mondays to Fridays or by appointment.
Admission: Free.
Contact: 425-0405 or www.theredhouse.org.

er carefully layers the digital imagery wrapping ribbons of color around geometric forms in the foreground and then deliberately diminishing their sinewy lines, as they vanish into the background. In "Into the Crucible, 2007" we're inside, peering out through a mass of planetary references and a Tinkertoy grid into a vast blue expanse dominated by an eyeball-studded orb. Strangely mystifying imagery.

Singer also exhibits a few oil on canvas paintings, which lack the smooth hand we see in the monoprints. In the paintings, he seems to try to recreate in oil what he so effectively achieves

using watercolor and digital imagery. The larger paintings (up to 72 inches by 74 inches) lack the grace of the smaller mixed media pieces, which is an interesting irony and addresses my earlier point.

Singer has successfully married tradition with technology in a way few artists can. By reinterpreting in oil what he so successfully creates in watercolor and digital technology, he takes a step backward.

Katherine Rushworth, of Cazenovia, is a former director of the Michael C. Rockefeller Arts Center (State University College at Fredonia) and of the Central New York Institute for the Arts in Education.