

A portrait of the landscape

The first thing you learn to see and draw is your own face — usually a circle with two dots for eyes and an arc for a smile. Your face sets the pattern for everybody else's face. Backgrounds come much later, if at all. The landscape is always an afterthought.

The 17 artists in this art show at the Allyn Gallup Contemporary Art Gallery keep the background world in the forefront of their minds. With a few exceptions (steps and a steeple here, a boat over there) their landscapes are *au naturel*. Their main evidence of humanity is the fact that a human painted them.

The landscape of print isn't wide enough to fit all of them in. But here's a sample:

Jim Cooper's "Tallulah Gorge" is a spectacular view of the spectacular Georgia canyon. This gorgeous gorge has the feel of a Chinese landscape painting — hard rock painted with the ephemeral indeterminacy of billowing clouds. But nothing lasts forever.

Rafael Ferrer's etching, "Fuego,"

shows a stand of palm trees against a beach. It's a night scene; the sky is a dark blue, the sea an even deeper blue. His line is loose and gestural, not over-thought or over-worked. His composition is strong but not forced. Ferrer's haphazard design mimics the chaos of the real world.

Bill Nichols' "Pond Reflections" isn't the typical variation on Monet's water lilies. The image is painterly but crisp. You get the sense you're looking at objective reality. You also get a sense of space — actually, three spaces. There's the pond's flat surface; the 3-D world the pond reflects; a hint of actual trees in front of the pond. Three worlds in one scene. Nicely done.

Tom Brydelsky's "Alizarin Field" is an image of a tree, dead center in a field with rolling hills behind it and random boulders around it. The image is a composite of four blood-red encaustic photographic prints of greater and lesser clarity and contrast. (The title is an obscure artistic pun: Alizarin is a red/orange dye. George Field invented it.)

John Beerman's "The Sound #2" is a monotype of a shoreline scene which could easily be Sarasota Bay. There's a wonderfully rendered horizon in the distance and a tiny boat in the lower left quadrant. The brushstrokes dance with vivid energy. The entire scene is surrounded by a band of 22-karat gold leaf. Wherever this scene is, it's a nice place to live — or mentally visit.

Peter Stephens is famous for his mixed-media paintings based on the images of pioneering 19th-century photographers like Eugene Atget and Léonard Misonne. His "Atget 06-03" (obviously based on one of Atget's photographs) depicts a decrepit set of steps leading up to a garden gone to seed. There are sepia-colored trees in the distance, a battered statue up close. The scene is more than a by-the-numbers imitation of an old photo. Stephens puts a misty shroud over everything. You feel a sense of time and all its insults.

This exhibit can change the landscape of your imagination. It's definitely worth your time.



Marty Fugate

Rafael Ferrer's "Fuego" glows with inner fire.

THE OBSERVER

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catalogue

'LOTS OF LANDSCAPES'

Where and when?

Allyn Gallup Contemporary Art, 556 S. Pineapple Ave.,
Sarasota • through ~~June 2~~ July 31

For more information call 366-2093.