

Sandow Birk



OREGON ARTSWATCH
OREGON'S ARTS & CULTURE NEWS

Art: new images for a new year

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January 1, 2017

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The first First Thursday of 2017, and other January visual arts events

Well, we pretty much got out of 2016 with the shirts on our backs, and suddenly here we are in a fresh new year.

January brings some intriguing visual art possibilities, including a major retrospective on Oregon master Louis Bunce (1907-1983) opening Jan. 21 at the Hallie Ford Museum of Art in Salem. On the same day in Eugene, the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art opens Sandow Birk: American Qur'an, a visual exploration of how the Muslim holy book intersects with American life. On Jan. 17 the Ronna and Eric Hoffman Gallery at Lewis & Clark College opens youniverse: past, present, future, by veteran Portland artist Tad Savinar, focusing on works conceived in Florence, Italy, in 2014 and 2016 and on prints, paintings, and sculpture from 1994 through 2011.

And the Portland Art Museum has several things coming up this month to help fill the Andy Warhol void: Rodin: The Human Experience, a show of 52 bronzes opening Jan. 21; Constructing Identity, a major look at the work of contemporary and historical African American artists from Henry Ossawa Tanner to Faith Ringgold and beyond, opening Jan. 28; and the Portland Fine Print Fair 2017, which brings together offerings from 20 top dealers, and which the museum hosts Jan. 27-29.

MORE IMMEDIATELY, THURSDAY is the first First Thursday of the art-gallery year, and galleries across town will be opening new monthly shows. (Some have holdovers, or different opening dates.) Here are a few shows that have caught our eye. There's lots more, so get out and explore on your own:

The iconic Oregon artist Carl Morris (1911-1993) has a show at Russo Lee Gallery, sharing space with Alex Hirsch. Morris moved from WPA-style murals (the Eugene post office) to his own form of earthbound abstract expressionism that kept vital touch with the mysteries of the Northwest landscape. Morris was at once regional and wise to the movements of the international art scene, and this exhibit covers roughly 50 years of development.

At Michael Parsons Fine Art, Alex Lilly's new show World Conflagration has a reportorial edge, akin in approach to much of Henk Pander's work, such as Pander's post-9/11 images from Ground Zero — or, as the gallery suggests, to Winslow Homer's Civil War illustrations. Lilly's sat on the

scene during highly charged political protests, sketching while the action whirls around him, and painted such literal conflagrations as oil well and oil train fires.

Maybe it's just because it's January in Portland, but a few galleries have travel on their mind. R. Keaney Rathbun has assembled an invitational show of faraway places, *Wish You Were Here: The Lure of the Exotic* at Waterstone Gallery, with Adam Sorenson, Mary Josephson, Baba Wague Diakite and others. For a more urban adventure, Blackfish pounds the pavement with Rory O'Neal's *Urban Hike of Manhattan*, gathered from the 600 miles he walked in the city over 34 days in 2015. At Elizabeth Leach, Victoria Adams' *Fathom* takes her out into the waterways with paintings that resuscitate the ancient and honorable art of the landscape. And at the photography gallery Blue Sky, Eric West's *Cityscape Burma* captures the country's recent urban bustle while Stan Raucher's *Metro: Scenes from an Urban Stage* capture everyday humans maneuvering life in mass-transit hardscapes around the world.

A couple of next-door-neighbor shows, Kendra Larson's new paintings of stretched and transmogrified dreamscapes at Augen and Kris Hargis's *The less I speak, the more I learn at Froelick*, appear to be playing around with contemporary ideas about figurative painting, neatly toying with the line connecting art and illustration and breathing fresh ideas into a form that once dominated a more nativist American art scene through the likes of Thomas Hart Benton, Marsden Hartley, and John Steuart Curry.

Some more obviously traditional craftsmanship (and several more contemporary designs, too) is on view this month at Guardino Gallery in the Alberta District, where the main gallery is devoted to work by ten members of Willamette Tapestry Artists. Their work ranges widely from pictorial to abstract, and is united by their medium. Guardino also has intaglio and letterpress prints by Patrick George, an architect and bookmaker: "I trace my interest in bookmaking back to Vitruvius, whose illustrations in his ten books on architecture have never been seen and so persist through time as enigmas."

And, on a less happy but maybe appropriately titled note, Emily Wobb's *Bad Dreams* will be the final show at Duplex Gallery, which over the past four years has featured the work of 63 artists. A tip of the hat, and a thank-you: It's been an adventure, and sometimes adventures end. Wobb, who describes herself as "a patriot in a post-patriotic era," has been thinking about traveling across the country and Canada and into Alaska: "It felt freeing and I felt a stronger patriotism than I had ever felt before." Post-election, she adds, "I feel guilty and betrayed by my love of my country."

IF YOU FIND YOURSELF HEADING TO PUGET SOUND, you might make a stop at the Tacoma Art Museum, where the exhibition *Coast to Cascades: C.C. McKim's Impressionist Vision* holds more than a little interest for Oregon art followers. McKim (1862-1939) moved from Portland, Maine to Portland, Oregon in 1910 and quickly established a reputation in the Northwest. He was a latter-day American Impressionist, closer in style to sometime Oregon visual chronicler Childe Hassam than to the younger generation of the Northwest mystics, and more traditional, but a figure of regional significance. The TAM exhibit, curated by Portland art scholar and gallerist Mark Humpal and TAM curator Margaret Bullock (who moved there several years ago from the Portland Art Museum), includes 43 paintings. It opened in mid-November and continues through March 26.