

# VISUAL ARTS

## Seattle art dealers pitch a winning show in "Century 21"

BY SHEILA FARR  
Seattle Times art critic

How do I love thee, "Century 21: Dealer's Choice"? Let me count the ways.

When I first heard about the plan for members of the Seattle Art Dealers Association to choose their favorite local artists for a collaborative show — bypassing ones they personally represent — it struck me as a dynamite idea. Art dealers are perennially pitching the merits of artists whose work they want to sell. That's a no-brainer. Here was a way to see what else they like, in a less partisan way.

Now that "Century 21" is on view at the elegant Wright Exhibition Space, the reality is even better than I'd imagined.

Thoughtfully installed, with fascinating wall texts (each written by the dealer who selected the piece), the show is a terrific survey that demonstrates the strength of the Seattle art scene. It helps fill the deep void left when Seattle Art Museum dropped its Northwest Annuals. Here we have a museum-style survey of the cream of local art, from emerging artists to established mas-

ters.

I can't overstate how important it is to support artists from our region with this kind of exposure. Thanks go to patrons Virginia and Bagley Wright for making their gallery available.

"Century 21" also demonstrates, in a tangible form, the purpose of the Art Dealers Association, the kind of generosity and solidarity it can foster, and what it can offer to the public.

For insights into the tastes and thinking of Seattle's gallery owners, this show is an excellent primer. Some choices are predictable — like Karen Light and Marcus Piña of Garde Rail Gallery (specialists in outsider art) gravitating to the outsider aesthetic of Terry Turrell, who shows at Grover/Thurston. Others come out of left field: Who would have thought that Pioneer Square dealer Linda Hodges was such a glass fancier? All three of her choices were glass artists: Dale Chihuly, Dante Marioni and William Morris.

As for the artwork? What can I say? The show looks great. I doubt anyone will fall in love



ALDEN MASON

Alden Mason put together a mouthwatering palette in his 1977 work "Summer Blusher," from the "Burpee Garden" series.

with every selection, but in all cases it's intriguing to read the labels and see who picked what and why. Here is a handful of my many favorites:

First, Alden Mason's classic 1977 "Summer Blusher" is a heartbreaker from that wonderful period in his work, the glowing, flowing abstractions of the "Burpee Garden" series.

What a mouthwatering palette! When Mason had to give up oil paint for health reasons, he reinvented his style in thick, loopy acrylic and has remained a forceful painter. But this ethereal series, the one that put him on the map, remains my favorite, and this particular painting is luscious. It was selected by Greg Kucera, who once repre-



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SEATTLE ART DEALERS ASSOCIATION  
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## EXHIBITION REVIEW

### "Century 21: Dealer's Choice"

10 a.m.-2 p.m. Thursday-  
Saturday through Nov. 21,  
Wright Exhibition Space, 407  
Dexter Ave. N., Seattle; free  
(206-264-8200).

sented the artist. Mason now shows at Foster/White Gallery.

Born in 1919, Mason is part of the old guard. Among emerging artists, I gravitated to the evocative form and miraculous surface of Nola Avienne's sculpture "Small Conversation," a study in the body language of attraction. Two attenuated forms bend toward each other, nearly touching, the delicate furls of their skin composed of a filigree of magnetized iron filings. Talk about highly charged! "Small Conversation" is a great example of material serving metaphor. Avienne shows at Catherine Person Gallery, and the work was chosen by David Martin of Martin/Zambito Fine Art.

I'm also crazy about Samantha Scherer's precise watercolors from the "Mad, Hopeless and Possible" series, which I admired earlier this year at Davidson Contemporary. With the Shackleton polar exploration in mind, Scherer left great expanses of white paper to contrast with the small dark figures she depicted, toiling against odds that seem insurmountable. Here's an artist adept at making powerful statements with minimal imagery. She was selected for the show by Gail Gibson.

When it comes to midcareer artists, "Century 21" offers a wide range of the region's talent. Sculptors Cris Bruch, Trimpin, Peter Millet, Mark Calderon, Akio Takamori, Lauren Grossman, Scott Fife and Jeffery Mitchell stand out for top-notch three-dimension work. Paintings by Zhi Lin and Jeffery Simmons shine, as do Alice Wheeler's photograph of Kurt Cobain and Fred Birchman's mixed-media drawing "Cherry Picker."

And that's just a partial list. My point here is simple: Don't miss "Century 21." It's a knockout. Gallery hours are limited (see above), so plan ahead.

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