

# FOSTER/WHITE GALLERY

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By Nancy Worssam

Exhibition review: *'Endless Flirting on Paper'*

Exhibition runs through April 24, Foster/White Gallery, 220 Third Ave. S., Seattle (206-622-2833 or [www.fosterwhite.com](http://www.fosterwhite.com)).

Art review: Alden Mason, 91, continues to delight and intrigue. A delightful show of works by Alden Mason at Foster/White.



Part trickster, part shaman, part philosopher and total artist extraordinaire, 91-year-old Alden Mason continues turning out paintings that delight and intrigue.

Although he's solidly a Northwesterner — born in Everett, educated at the UW, where he joined the faculty of the School of Art and taught there for more than 30 years — Mason is a man of the world. Intrigued by non-Western cultures, he has visited indigenous peoples in Africa, Central America and Asia, all of whom have influenced his work. So too have children's art and folk art.



What results are abstractions within which a viewer finds such recognizable objects as animals both wild and tame, flowers, old trucks, human forms — or at least parts of them — and a wild collection of inanimate objects. They seem to bubble up from a subconscious that recognizes the pathos of life yet truly appreciates a good joke.

Of course his painting reflects his unusual life experiences, but he makes it very clear that he copies nothing. "I assimilate," he says. "The assimilation shows itself in my paintings." So you might see evidence in his work of the massive headdresses of the Huli tribesmen from Papua New Guinea, or the spirit bird that warned them not to reveal too many of their stories to this outsider.

You'll see the chickens and dogs from his childhood memory. And there are numerous images of the tulips his mother loved. She, by the way, lived to 104.

Earlier in his career, Mason created large-scale paintings. You can see examples of these mammoth works at numerous local venues including the lobby of the new Four Seasons Hotel, the King County Administration Building downtown, and in the collections of virtually every museum in the Northwest as well as in public and corporate collections nationwide. Beginning in November 2010, the Seattle Art Museum will present a yearlong exhibition exploring the many facets of Mason's work.

Over the years he developed severe allergic reactions to the oils and turpentine so moved to acrylics and watercolors. The current exhibit features 22 paintings, mostly oil stick and watercolor washes on paper with some acrylics on canvas. They capture all the wild abandon, spontaneity and improvisational mastery of this artist who embraces life and never fails to capture its wonder.

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