

## ASSORTMENT

*Century 21: Dealer's Choice* is a display of the 49 Washington artists that Seattle art dealers (with the exceptions of Scott Lawrimore and the fellows of Platform Gallery) believe are the best. It is intended to be a **historic occasion**. The membership of the Seattle Art Dealers Association has never

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

Wright

Exhibition Space

Through Nov 21.

created an exhibition before, but beyond that the show turns out not to be particularly historic, or even particularly meaningful. It is conservative, narrow, and doesn't come

close to capturing the dimension or ambition of what's happening on the ground. A few older artists seem to have been rescued from obscurity merely to satisfy the vagary of a dealer's personal taste. (I can think of no other reason why Mark Rediske, Richard Hutter, and David French, with their **pleasing but generic semi-abstracts**, would be included on a list of the state's best artists when Dan Webb, Alex Schweder, Gary Hill, Isaac Layman, Susan Robb, Wynne Greenwood, Gretchen Bennett, Deb Baxter—should I go on?—SuttonBeresCuller, Shawn Patrick Landis, Anne Mathern, and the entire Fantagraphics crew are not.) There's nothing new here, but how could there be? The youngest artist in the show is 33; **26 of the 49 artists are over 50**. From this bias one can presume, whether or not it's true, that Seattle dealers have not been doing much homework for a very long time, which is a depressing thought.

To enjoy the show, it's best to let go of the unpleasant notion that this lineup represents your state's entire all-star team. Instead, take what you like and leave the rest. I like a twisting slab of steel called *Weeping Woman* by Peter Millett, which finds its male counterpart in a mesmerizing building-creature painted by Whiting Tennis; the glowing rings of Jeffrey Simmons; **curly black ceramic foo dogs by Jeffrey Mitchell**; a Joe Park painting of a magazine reproduction of a Winogrand photograph; majestic, tiny black watercolor figures laboring in a world of snow by Samantha Scherer. The installation, bookended by veterans Alden Mason and Gaylen Hansen, has beautiful moments (a tiny James Martin zoo lion juxtaposed with a similarly hued giant 1977 abstraction by Mason is one). And there is the occasional nice recent work, especially a bright, vigorous painting by Claire Cowie.

It's also nice to see what others see. Saya Moriyasu's work looks **more raw, more elemental**, having been selected by outsider-art venue Garde Rail Gallery. James Harris's choice of an immaculate gem of metaphysical surrealism by the late Robert Helm reflects back on the young artists Harris represents. William Traver's choices of interactive works by Trimpin and Lead Pencil Studio reflect his questing, experimental nature more than his own gallery's shows do. There are stories here—just not the one the dealers intended. ■