

# ART Sparks and Retrosparks

## Metzger's Boxes light up OAL – Barth's in-the-buff and other artsy stuff

Elizabeth Ann James

**R**obert Metzger's "Photographic Light Boxes" were at the Ohio Art League during March. If there is sophisticated art-to-invest-in hereabouts, this is it. Metzger's boxes are wonderful for several reasons.

First. They are attractive and pleasing to the eye. Their mode is neutral, unobtrusive. Modern, not sterile. A Metzger box will look good anywhere, in corporate offices, in chapels, or sitting rooms.

Second. These boxes (each one is actually a kind of abstract painting) are well executed, well put together. Does one use the term "render" when referring to photographs?

Third. Metzger's light-filled boxes are meditative, soothing, spiritual, one might say. They exude the "feel" of the natural world. Because of their soft melding colors they might be described as "tinged with romanticism."

There were four aluminum light boxes in Metzger's March show, which the artist titled "S/Parcel." That's an acronym for Space Parcel. "S/Parcel" also refers to the parcelling out of outer and inner space and to the cutting and splicing of photographic particles.

*Butte* is shadowy; it evolves when the viewer changes position. All Metzger's boxes change while you are watching. A limestone yellow pervades the space representing sky, or forest or sand. The *Butte* is a jagged, pointed one, or two. It could just as well represent pine trees or reflections on the water. Similar to the surrounding space, it consists of a system of infinitely small "strokes."

Metzger aptly refers to his work as "minimalist, sparse." He cuts up, dismembers, his own early large photographs. Many, but not all of them, were outdoor scenes. He digitizes, pixelizes, cuts. He paints without painting.

*Storm* – the electric storm itself gathers in a bright triangular ray. The pale round clouds form a lateral sweep; the tones are faintly magenta and purple. The spirit of

old Dutch painters from the Zuyder Zee preside, at least in our imagination.

*Nude*, approximately the same size as *Storm*, contains Metzger's familiar yet invisible pixels. The artist has deconstructed a nude photo, and the resulting image, or images, resembles the birth of a sun. The nucleus is white hot surrounded by dull glows. Again, the mood is one of calm, or rather tranquility.

*Venue* is, indeed, a deconstructed surprise, to my mind. Look carefully. If you want to know how many angels dance on the head of a pin, this pixelated painting may tell you the color-full answer.

Metzger loves the outdoors, loves to "drink it in." But he rarely takes photographs outside. He's not a plain air sort of guy!

"The light boxes emit more than an exact image," he says. "They emit a mood. They're metaphysical."

Agreed. Metzger is a longtime Columbus resident with shows at Michael Oer Gallery and the Dublin Art Center on his resume. In the last two years, he has won both an Ohio Arts Council Individual Artist's grant, and a Greater Columbus Arts Council Individual Artist's grant. (I told you he was good!) Metzger can be contacted through the Ohio Art League, 954 N High Street. Call 299-8225.

The Ohio Art League has continued to expand in sophistication and latitude. It's a top gallery in central Ohio. Up next (it looks like a blast, no pun intended) "Brick By Brick" pays tribute to "Ohio's rich ceramic art and industrial history." Five contemporary artists, each in her own way, celebrate Ohio's place in the clay belt.

**G**reat Hop Night Takeovers: At 27 E. Russell, next door to JungHaus in the same building, **Metro Rentals**, under the management of **Rod E. Lange**, shows 11 artists during each Saturday Hop.

Children's work is exhibited downstairs. The entire building becomes a showcase for these way-above-average artists, and the management is generous with their hours d'oeuvre. With **Leat** and **Mel Gibson's** film in the air, **Victor Mann's**



Craig Carlisle's *Teddy Bird Looking into the Light*, 12" acrylic on pane, included among other works on view at Sharon Weiss Gallery, April 2 – April 30. Call 291-5683.

large depictions of Jesus were timely. Mann uses a complex acrylic-and-silk-screen process, and the results are laudatory. See heartofmann.com **Almea Lambes'** "Angels" flew gorgeously.

You can't rush through 27. Too much is going on. The art is always present but cannot be viewed at non-Hop times without making arrangements at 774-7500.

Metro Rentals offers valet parking for a mere \$10 which covers the entire Hop, 6 to 10 pm. Note: JungHaus Gallery at 27 E. Russell is open during regular hours.

Conquering Hero. Favorite Son **Craig Carlisle** has returned from Los Angeles to spend April at **Sharon Weiss Gallery**, 20 East Lincoln Street. In January, Carlisle had a highly successful show at the George Billis Gallery in New York City. With his special brand of spiritual and technical aplomb, Carlisle will present a Weiss show that is unflinched but features **Teddy Birds**.

The postcard reveals a sleek gray **Teddy Critt** with big round eyes, a smiley face grin, and a beak. *Teddy Bird Looking into the Light*. Ted is one of Carlisle's shoulder-up takes. The artist is famous for his iconic "Big Head" paintings. Congratulations, **Craig**.

**Wright is Back!** Although he's never really been gone. Studio B, 1628 West First Avenue in Grandview presents **Robert S. Wright** in "New Paintings" thru May 8. Wright paints and collages, and collages and paints, with an excellent panache. He's versatile too. He possesses "a handle" on swimming, sledding, film-watching and the American media blitz. As an alum of Rhode Island School of Design, Wright manages to make design and art his business, and to succeed at the enterprise.

**"N**ude and Seminude" will show in the middle room at **Barth Gallery**, 3047 Indianola Avenue, thru April 11, "perhaps longer," says Director **Tom Minnick**.

*Two Men in the Artist's Studio*, an oil on canvas, was painted by **Lev Vassiliev Gudsikov** in Russia in 1950. Here is post war realism exemplified. Two brawny men nearly fill the canvas. They lean against each other, balance each other off, as do athletes posed for a competition, one knee bent in a classical discus or wrestling pose.

The pair may be actual wrestlers; wrestling is "big" in Russia. Here is "that moment frozen in time" captured by a very good painter. Perhaps the idea of two naked men's touching, even knee to knee, required an element of daring in that era. A detail: the men wear white pads on their private parts! Oh, that control freak Stalin!

**Rob Colgan's** *Passion* is not exactly Mel Gibson's passion. The unassuming black-and-white photograph glistens with tenderness. Two naked lovers, shot from the waist up, rest upon each other in a shadowy room. It was somewhat unclear to me whether Colgan's subjects are man and woman, or two men, or – and that is part of the magic. Tenderness and intimacy prevail. A slight irregularity of composition adds to a sense of vulnerability.