

## Outside the Box: Zeuxis Paints the Landscape

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"Outside the Box: Zeuxis Paints the Landscape" is a traveling national exhibit of competent landscape paintings currently installed in the Toni & Stuart B. Young Gallery at the Delaware College of Art and Design (DCAD). These mostly smallish landscape paintings are from 22 nationally known artists who make up the artist group Zeuxis ([www.zeuxis.us](http://www.zeuxis.us)). Zeuxis is a group of contemporary still-life painters, named after a 5th century Greek painter whose work no longer exists today. The group chose to be identified with him because he was famous for being one of the earliest known realist painters, who worked during the time of Aristotle. This particular show, "Outside the Box," refers to this group of painters working outdoors, or outside of their usual indoor, still-life format. Paintings in this exhibition represent unique locales as diverse as a New York City pocket park, a California hillside, a Midwestern suburban sidewalk, and a Medieval European hill town. Strangely though, rather than contrast the distinctive energy of each location, these restful scenes and silent glimpses project a soft, almost even similarity to each other. Comparable painting techniques and related color palettes give the viewer a sense that one painter's hazy, peaceful suburban front yard in Illinois oddly resembles the serenity of another painter's misty, calm Italian hillside.

All of the 50 or so works in the show are very nicely painted pictures. Phyllis Floyd's blocky, silent watercolor scenes of Madison Square Park in New York City speak of the isolation one can feel even in the middle of a great urban center. A large, horizontal abstraction by Joseph Byrne entitled "Trees and Sky #7" has the lively movement reminiscent of a pre-geometric Mondrian tree. "Between Ocean and Sky #1 and #2" are two small thick impasto abstractions by Ying Li that seem to billow with warm, Pacific Ocean breezes.

DCAD certainly contributes to the cultural life of downtown Wilmington. As well as providing a full curriculum of studio art classes, and exhibiting their own student and faculty artwork, they also present an annual curated exhibit in their spacious Market Street gallery. In previous years DCAD's curated exhibition has presented the work of national artist groups, including "Ecstasy & Silence," which featured painters who work with light, space and color, and "Tenacious Beauty," which featured works from the collection of Kenkeleba House in New York. Along with the "Outside the Box" exhibit, the school also invited contributing Zeuxis artists to visit and lecture about their work, but none of them was available to appear for the February opening. It is a shame that artists cannot find the time to explain—especially to enthusiastic students—the what, when, where, how and why of their work.

Perhaps because much of the work included in the current show is small in scale and modest in manner the overall exhibit ultimately remains restrained rather than dynamic: the exhibit whole does not expand upon the sum of the visual parts. But the exhibit's warm tones provided welcome visual counterpoints to the cold, gray Atlantic breeze-scape that was spinning along Wilmington's Market Street on a February afternoon. And I look forward to more downtown Art exhibits, whatever the style or weather.