

ARTS

Blow-torching achieves unusual delicacy

Charred works surprise viewers.

By Melanie White

This off-season art series will examine an unusual piece – whether painting, photograph or print – in a different gallery each week.

Mariam Diehl, director of Meyer-Milagros Gallery, chose to focus on Richard Painter's *Becoming II*, a charred depiction of a luna moth on wood panel. The piece measures 45 by 49 inches and costs \$7,725.

Painter, 53, lives in Tennessee, where he received his bachelor's degree in painting from Austin Peay State University's Center of Excellence in Fine Arts.

Meyer-Milagros – to become the Diehl Gallery when it opens in a new location in June, at 155 W. Broadway

– will host a solo show of Painter's charred panels from Aug. 21 through 27. The gallery closes its doors in its current location at 155 Center St. on April 29.

Q - How did Painter make this piece?

A - It is burned, charred wood panel. It is a really quite fascinating technique. The artist covers the image with fire-retardant materials and uses a blow-torch to char

the rest [of the panel]. Then he removes the retardant and uses white pastel to highlight a little here and there. He does the lighter, delicate charring with a pencil torch.

Q - How did you discover him?

A - I saw an image of his work in a magazine and was stunned by it. I was completely blown away by his technique and his subject-matter.

Q - How does this piece fit in with Painter's body of work?

A - This is a luna moth. All of his subjects have a sense of skeletal structure and fragility. He uses the same image repeatedly – he's done several of the same old boat, a violin. *Becoming I* is also a luna moth. It's in the Huntsville Museum [in Alabama].

He's been doing charring since 1994. Prior to that he did a series on shipping crates in dock yards and was using charcoal. He wasn't seal-

ing the charcoal finish, so it would develop over time, and people would look at them and thought they were burned, which led him to develop this burn series.

Q - Who would you compare Painter to? What influences or references do you see in his work?



Richard Painter used torches of different sizes to char the image of *Becoming II*, which hangs at Meyer-Milagros Gallery. White pastel adds delicate highlights.

A - I have seen other artists use burning as a technique, but I haven't seen anyone do it with such finely tuned images.

It's more usual in abstract work. So to see it in such finely detailed, technical work ... is quite appealing. In my mind he stands alone.

I haven't seen anything that makes me think, 'Oh, that looks like Richard Painter's work,' which is why I think he's so unique.

Q - How do people tend to react to his pieces?

A - People come in and say, 'Oh, that's really

beautiful' – then when they find out it's not a painting on a black background, the level of interest heightens instantly, because it's so unique.

Too see more works by Painter, visit www.meyer-milagrosgallery.com/artists/painter.html.

Hot Pics

Richard Painter's *Becoming II*

Photo summit partners with conservation shooters

Spring workshop to focus on environmental photography and its role in conservation.

By Angus M. Thuermer Jr.

An annual spring photography workshop next month will focus on conservation work.

Photography at the Summit, a weeklong workshop organized by former *National Geographic* photo director Rich Clarkson, teams with the International League of Conservation Photographers this spring. Clarkson's Denver-based agency hosts the workshop from May 17 to 23 at the National Museum of Wildlife Art.

Headquartered in the offices of Conservation International, the three-year-old photographer's league carries on a tradition as old as photography itself. Photography has been used for decades to draw attention to nature and is increasingly important in a shrinking world facing climate change and other environmental challenges.



Jackson's Tom Mangelsen, a wildlife photographer and owner of the Images of Nature galleries, will be one of the instructors at Photography at the Summit.

Faculty for the workshop includes some of the best-known nature photographers in the world, such as David Doubilet, Franz Lanting and Jackson's own Tom Mangelsen. Doubilet is known for his underwater work for *National Geographic*,

Lanting for his painstaking care in portraying animals in their environment and Mangelsen for his compositions and behavior shots of wildlife.

Also on the staff are Jack Dykinga, a Pulitzer Prize winner, Kathy

Moran, a *Geographic* editor for natural history, and Nick Nichols, another *Geographic* photographer respected for the depth of his vision. David Schonauer, editor of *American Photo*, Bob Smith, a photographer who helps run Mangelsen's Images of Nature galleries and Brian Storm, founder of MediaStorm, also will be lecturing and reviewing students' work.

Instruction will include technical coaching as well as advice on artistry, originality and creativity. Students take advantage of numerous field opportunities in the region to build their portfolios and make images that faculty will critique.

Instructors will give evening lectures and digital printing and multimedia slideshows will be part of the curriculum. Nikon will loan the latest digital cameras and lenses to students.

The gathering also will feature a business and education meeting of the League of Conservation Photographers the opening weekend of the workshop.

Registration is available at www.photographyatthesummit.com or by calling 800-745-3211.