



Photo by Kevin Higley

The traditional blends with the surreal in Hawaiian-born artist Reuben Tam's mountain and seascapes, displayed at Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery.

Artist tints 'island experiences' with traditional, surreal styles

By Charlie Krig

Reuben Tam describes his paintings as "the marks of nature, chance marks, drips, scratches, scorches. Wherever something has happened to something else and leaves its mark. It makes the marks of time."

Tam, whose paintings will be displayed at the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery until Feb. 29, was born in Hawaii, and attributes his art sources to island experiences.

At a Sheldon press conference Tuesday, Tam said, "I like analogies. I can't arrest an image with clean-cut definitions. . . To an abstract artist I'm neat, to a traditional artist I'm messy."

His collection of Hawaiian mountain and Maine coast scenes encompass both traditional and surrealistic styles.

To accomplish this style combination he said he begins with the subject's shape and tries to preserve its "basic structural design." He then shades a two-dimensional outline of the subject, sometimes using unusual colors.

Although Tam claims that his work rarely changes, he admits to experimenting with new colors and atmospheres.

Tam used the example of a Hawaiian lava flow, one of his favorite subjects.

"There are views that tourists very rarely go to see," he said. "They ask, 'What is there to see?' I emphasize elements of nature such as fault lines, cracks, stratification and shapes."

"I think the whole purpose of being an artist is to go beyond what we already know, to further the horizon of convention," Tam said. He said that he taught his students to "look for the beauty in common things, like a dirty sink."

Tam was an instructor at the Brooklyn Museum Art School from 1946 to 1974 and acted as a visiting professor at Oregon State University (1966), Haystack (Ore.) School (1971), and Queens College, City University of New York (1973).

After quitting teaching two years ago, Tam said he has devoted work to his personal art. When a new subject or technique interests him, he said he isolates himself for up to two months to perfect the idea.

He said his ultimate goal, however, is to create a painting with a counterpart in nature that is seen in recognizable forms but enhanced abstractly.

Book is Eiseley's redemption

By Bill Roberts

All The Strange Hours, by Loren Eiseley/ Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, \$9.95.

Nebraskan Loren Eiseley contradicts himself in his haunting autobiography, *All The Strange Hours*. The 68-year-old scholar, former hobo, poet and essayist looks at his life and decides it has had little or no purpose. But the reader must disagree.

True, Eiseley spent his life seeking something permanent to believe in, something that always holds true, and he never found it. But the honesty of his search and the fact that he made a book of it redeems his life, gives it dignity, grace and purpose.

Eiseley is a scientist. He demands proof and consistency of explanations, but he can't find a perfect explanation.

Although he thinks Darwin's theory of evolution answers many questions, it does not tell how life began from inorganic material: "It is as if matter dreamed and muttered in its sleep," he writes. "But why, and for what reason it dreams, there is no evidence."

For Eiseley, a new fact or discovery brings an emotion. "Always, standing above excavations," writes Eiseley the archeologist, "I have been both excited about what the shovel would reveal and disconsolate and stricken at the sacrilege done to the dead."

Remembers prison break

The method of *All The Strange Hours* is to take an event, often a slight incident, and delve into the thoughts and feelings that accompanied it.

The first public event he remembers is a headline-making prison escape. Three convicts from the Lincoln penitentiary killed the warden and a guard and then blasted their way through the front gate with nitroglycerin. But the warden was cruel, recently had fired a chaplain

who tried to reform prison conditions, and the convicts escaped into a terrible blizzard that contributed to their quick recapture. The line between good and evil was not clear and the young Eiseley sided with the escapees.

"I was already old enough to know one should flee from the universe," he writes, "but I did not know where to run."

Recalling a more recent incident, Eiseley tells what happened while he lectured at a college commencement. He was nervous, gripping the podium and surrounded by photographers with "police state" equipment. His mind returned to his days as a young drifter.

Could have killed

He remembers clinging to the rods of a speeding freight train as a railroad policeman tried to knock him off. As they struggled, Eiseley recalls that he had an opportunity to wrest the company man from the car and throw him to certain death under the wheels.

He did not do it but he remembers that he wanted to. In thinking back on the incident, he admits that he still feels the "red glowing wire of murder" in his brain. This kind and tolerant man realizes he is capable of killing.

Honesty distinguishes this book. But Eiseley's insistence that life comes mysteriously, goes out in a flash and is not remembered simply does not apply to himself.

"I sometimes think that men and their thoughts are like jack-o'-lanterns upheld on poles at Halloween," he writes. "They float and grin awhile before some dark un-answering window, and then, like hollow pumpkins, they are taken down, dismantled, and cast out."

All The Strange Hours is Eiseley's tenth book. He has accumulated readers who will not let his thoughts be cast out. With this autobiography he is sure to garner more keepers of his special brand of melancholy wisdom.

arts & entertainment

Canada's opera troupe performs at Pershing

Puccini's *La Boheme*, performed in English by the Canadian Opera Company, will be presented at 8 p.m. Friday at Pershing Auditorium by Lincoln Community Concerts.

Tickets are by season membership only.

Jan Rubes, director of the Canadian Opera Company, devised rear-screen film projection techniques for this production.

Union photos Dan Williams' idea of reality

"My photographs are my personal perceptions of reality. I try to be aware of how light is capable of intensifying that reality for me," says Dan Williams, creator of the photographs now exhibited in the Nebraska Union Main Lounge.

Williams, assistant professor of art at Ohio University, has had works exhibited in group and one-man shows nationally. He has prints in the James Van Der Zee Institute and is represented in the *Black Photographers Annual*, Vols. I and III.

Williams, born in Brooklyn, N.Y., studied painting at Brooklyn College with nationally known artists Philip Pearlstein and Ad Reinhardt.

The Union Program Council's Visual Arts Committee is sponsoring an artist-in-residence program with Williams Feb. 9 through 11 in addition to the exhibit. During his UNL residency, he will participate in informal sessions at 2:30 p.m. in the Union Main Lounge and at 6:30 p.m. in the Abel North Lounge Feb. 10.

His illustrated presentation is scheduled for 8 p.m. Feb. 10 in the Union Small Auditorium. Williams also will conduct workshops in the art department on Feb. 11.

Williams' exhibit will be on display until March 5.

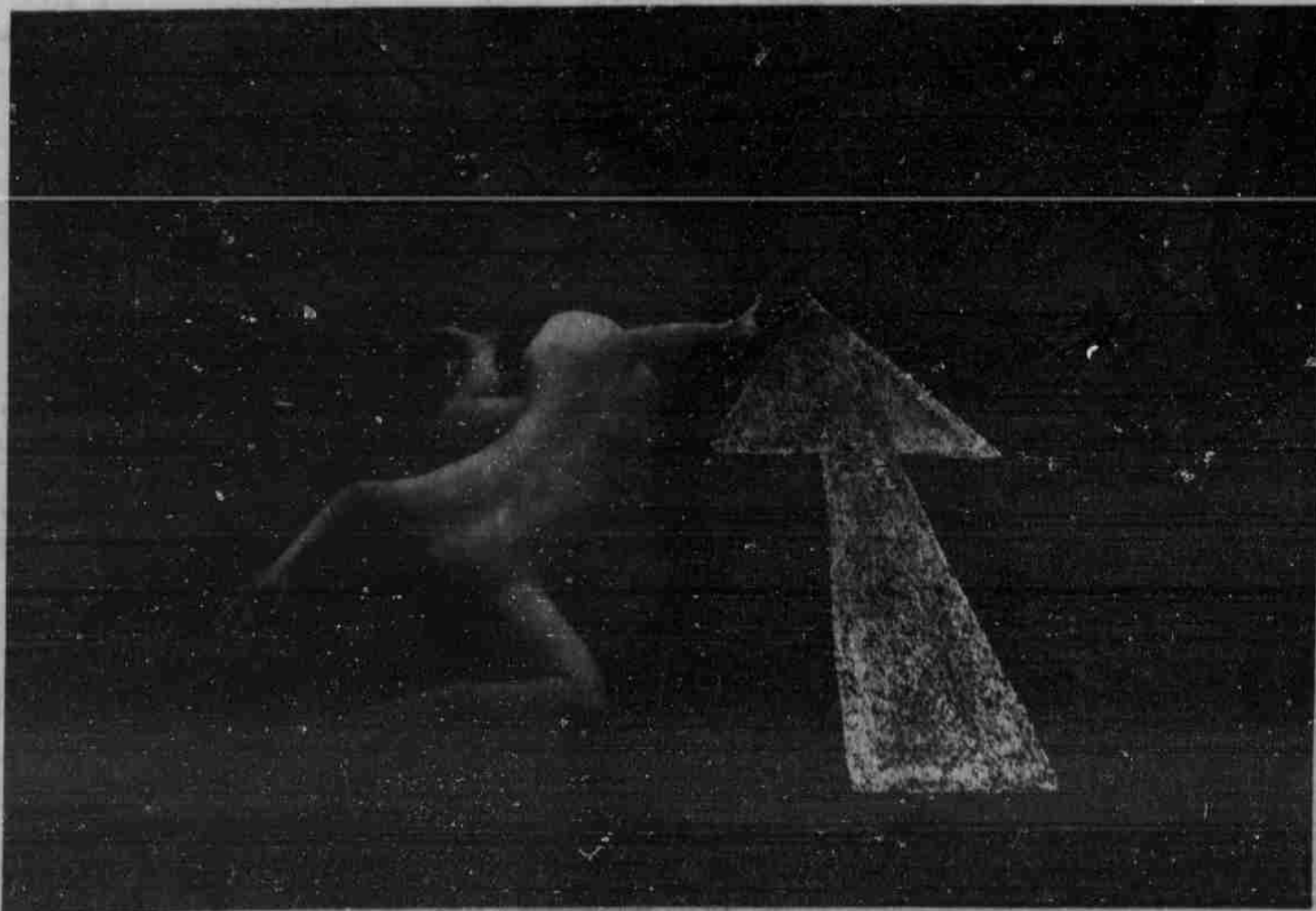


Photo courtesy of Dan Williams