



Marc Manning (below) captures the violence of nature in his paintings, which are on display this month at Portland Art Center Annex.

The Edge of Sleep and Waking

Vast plains of darkness through which rise hopeful signs of light. Visions of violence and emptiness through which emerge images of comfort and beauty.

“My work,” writes visual artist **Marc Manning**, “attempts to re-create the feeling of that precious few seconds after waking up from a dream.”

Walking close to that dusk of consciousness, Manning’s work embraces the imagery of both waking and sleeping worlds, without working at deducing meaning from that imagery. “This moment,” he continues, “contains a universe charged with human emotion, without logic, answers or purpose.”

Manning, a gay artist and musician, began his life and career in Philadelphia and has hailed from Portland since 2003. In the Rose City, he has enjoyed a number of showings, including exhibitions at Disjecta and The Haze Gallery. He and three other artists (all featured in the current issue of *Portland Modern*) are on display through Feb. 25 at Portland Art Center Annex, 32 N.W. Fifth Ave. A portion of the sales will help the center reinvigorate its space.

At first, one is fooled by the seeming two-dimensional nature of Manning’s paintings. But after a moment’s viewing, the eye focuses on unimaginable depths and secret subtle energies. The imagistic, post-photography feel to some of Manning’s pieces—as if the camera has been abandoned for the brush, but not the lens—is complemented by random penciled images and words. He actually has worked with etched photography in the past, though his current use of oil pastel on paper arguably has a more vibrant, immediate pulse and play.

Manning’s exhibit includes “Ursa Major and Ursa Minor” and “Canis Major,” two extraordinary pieces that are deconstructed, secular versions of Van Gogh’s night skies, in which there are no divine colors, no ascended-man architecture—only the blackness of night and the soft, fuzzy ambiguities of stars, promising comfort after the “miles to go.” Evocations of violent nature, including “Tornado,” “Tsunami” and “Forest Fire,” start the viewers deep in intense blocks of black or nightmarish swipes of color but lead them to embracing warmth and comforting passions—almost an acceptance of the disastrous beautiful.

Also available for viewing and purchase is a limited edition (and shockingly affordable) artist’s book called *All Your Things*, a collection of amusing, disturbing and beautiful line drawings.

—Glenn Scofield Williams

