

Curator's Eye: Winston Wächter Fine Art

• by [Tim Appelo](#) — November 1, 2010

The Murrow Tradition

Seattle artist **Ethan Murrow**, now based in New York, is probably tired of people asking him about his revered grandpa, pioneer news broadcaster Edward R. Murrow. Still, he admits there's a bit of influence – just not what you think. “He was obviously very focused on finding the truth,” says the present-day Murrow. “My work is almost the opposite – I’m particularly interested in fiction.” Ethan fakes you out with the exquisite draftsmanship of his large, photo-like drawings. “People think they’re photographs, and then you get up close and you can see his hand more,” says Winston Wächter gallerist Stacey Winston-Levitan, who discovered Murrow before he left Seattle for wider renown in 2005.



Ethan Murrow, And Be Devoid of Rivals, 2010, graphite on paper, 48 x 48 in.

Murrow's faux photos depict events that never happened. "He creates these fantasies about explorations that have gone amok," says Winston-Levitan. Until now, he has used himself as a model, posing as a dangerous dreamer, a historical explorer taking big risks to achieve great things. In his new show about a fictitious meteorite hunter, he uses as a model his collaborator and wife, Cornish grad Vita Weinstein-Murrow. "I'm influenced by Michel Fournier, the French balloonist who goes twenty-five miles up to the stratosphere and parachutes down," says Murrow. Murrow spent almost \$20 million on three failed attempts at the same. "I admire the spunk and hardheadedness it takes. I'm interested in the delicate balance between failure and success." This is how he relates to Edward Murrow, who grew up dirt poor in a tent by Skagit Valley railroad tracks (a landing site now used by parasailers jumping off Blanchard Mountain). He struggled with math and spelling, then launched himself by reading Roman emperor/philosopher Marcus Aurelius, who wrote, "A man's worth is no greater than his ambitions."

Ethan Murrow's ambitions are considerable, and his artistic worth is rising. "Ethan's last show here sold out," says Winston-Levitan, "and his film Dust [made with Weinstein-Murrow] was chosen for the New York Film Festival. A lot of people in Hollywood collect his work. He's such a visionary. I just love the connection of his work to film and documentary." •

Will Be Snaring Meteorites

Winston Wächter Fine Art

November 3–January 6

winstonwachter.com

FOCAL POINTS

Education: Carleton College (B.A.), University of North Carolina (M.F.A.)

Celebrities who collect Murrow: Harrison Ford, Sheryl Crow

Cinematic influences on Murrow: Werner Herzog's Loch Ness Monster mockumentary, the famous Sasquatch film The Endurance: Shackleton's Legendary Antarctic Expedition

Other influences: Herman Melville, Barnum and Bailey, Orson Welles, René Magritte

Why his figures pose so stiffly: "I'm interested in early photography, the directness and awkwardness that was inherent in it because of how still people had to be."

What the titles of his artworks mean: "The titles function like a little snippet of dialogue from the character, almost as if she's reporting to someone, praising herself."