

Futuristic Works That Define Dimensions of Time and Space

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EARLY this century, a group of Italian poets, painters and sculptors known as the Futurists rebelled against representing the world as a static place, opting for a dynamic that bordered on the out-of-control.

Today artists like Adam Ross or Chris Hipkiss make images of the future, emphasizing their personalized brand of a Utopian society represented as 1950's kitsch or fetishistic fantasy. Some of these forward-looking artists produced depictions of places with an extreme atmosphere, testing the strength of the human spirit, while, at the same time, idealizing an environment that to most would appear harsh and uninviting.

"Serdar Arat: Recent Paintings and Works on Paper," the current show at the Concordia Gallery here, features the futuristic paintings and mixed media works of Serdar Arat. Mr. Arat's portrayal of the future is somewhere between peaceful and puzzling. His art can be viewed as Neo-Futurist in the sense that it teeters on the edge of what Umberto Boccioni called the fourth dimension. Boccioni, who died in 1916, believed that the Futurists' approach of combining many aspects of a subject's physical and emotional presence afforded them a new and more universal depth in their representations. Mr. Arat's Futurist predecessors were best known for their infatuation with energy, specifically high-speed movement, while Mr. Arat turned his attention to a few of the Futurists' other concerns: atmosphere, mood and memory.

Mr. Arat paints tomorrow's vistas, settings where ergonomic design concepts dominate living and working environments. Overall, his compositions, and the largely unfamiliar elements within them, suggest a near-weightless environment. Mr. Arat's best piece, the diptych "Perpetual Sunset" (1999), consists of two elegantly shaped canvases hung one above the other.

Each of the two sections has roughly three and a half flying saucer-shaped slits, which run up and down both canvases. Contained by these eight forms are various stages of modestly rendered, abstracted eclipses. The vertical stacking of

these oblong components, and the rhythmic shapes echoed in the background, gives "Perpetual Sunset" its floating effect.

"The Island" (1998) — after "Isle of the Dead" (1880) by Arnold Böcklin — is an excellent example of how one can define time and space by blending color, texture and movement. Here, in Mr. Arat's version of Böcklin's famous painting, the artist hints at some futuristic city, a land

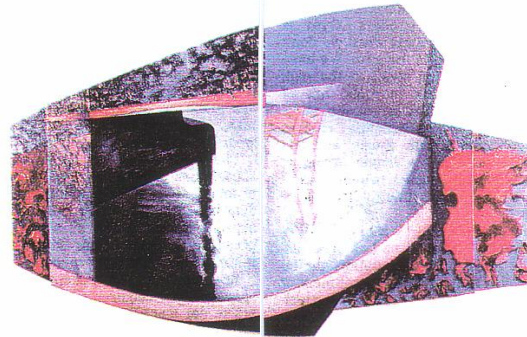
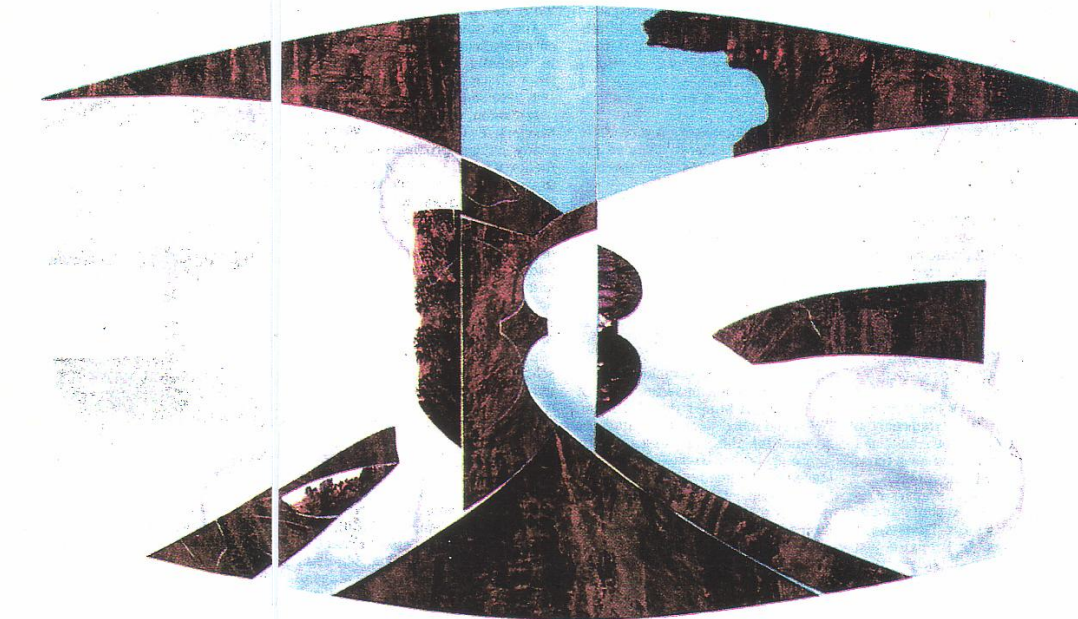
An artist taps his subconscious in representing a subject.

reliant on the elevated dwelling, a globally warmed world where rising waters and the sun's deadly rays have become commonplace. Through the water, in the foreground of the composition, travels some sort of spirit as it rapidly passes through subtle gradients of color and texture. In the distance, one sees faint representations — structures that include only a door to enter and exit — eternal shelters safe from the extreme elements of this new age.

Some of Mr. Arat's art is far less abstract. In "For Piano and Cello — Gardens and Pools" (1997), one can spot a piano, a chair and a cello. As is the case in much of his work, Mr. Arat deals with opposites. Here, a piano and chair sit precariously in six inches of lace-textured water, while the cello, which dances and spins off to the right of the composition, is engulfed in flames.

His works on paper, specifically, the two versions of "Kiss in the Garden" dated 1997 and 1998, also deal with the effects of a pair of opposites: positive and negative space. Both works are made up of two distinct layers of cut paper. The cut-out portion offsets the resulting voids. Because of their harmonious compositions, the mood of these mixed-media pieces is generally more optimistic than the larger shaped canvases, though they lack a narrative element.

In "Requiem" (1999), Mr. Arat demonstrates that he can make pow-



erful smaller works, too. "Requiem" has all of the strength of his larger paintings; the use of opposites, futuristic references, movement atmosphere, and the like, all controlled by

his innate sense to adjust scale. Here, because "Requiem" is painted on wood, he is able to incise a few key lines directly into the surface of the painting, giving this piece an added

"Kiss in the Garden," mixed media on paper, above, and "For Piano and Cello — Gardens and Pools," acrylic on linen, in the exhibition "Serdar Arat: Recent Paintings and Works on Paper," at the Concordia Gallery.

dimension. The palette, which is predominantly deep Dioxazine Purple and pale Turner's Yellow, and the carefully planned surface textures are just right for this size painting.

"Foot Prints in the Snow" (1998) is the exhibition's lone failure. The subject, an ascending cluster of relief-like footprints — markings that in no way indicate depth since they remain the same size right up to the horizon — throw the whole composition into a tailspin. This combined with an uninspired palette and an overtly textured surface results in an annoying appearance. One gets the sense that Mr. Arat is reaching for an unusual spiritual effect, which is admirable. The two-dimensionality of it all, however, left me cold.

Mr. Arat's forte is his ability to

create a multidimensional representation of a subject. His understanding of color, his employment of shaped painting surface, his use textured acrylic paint and his ability to tap his subconscious makes it show one of the best so far of season.

"Serdar Arat: Recent Paintings and Works on Paper" will be displayed at the Concordia Gallery through Oct. 5. The gallery is in Scheele Memorial Library on campus of Concordia College. For information number is 337-9300, extension 2185.