

review

M.K. Gurth

WHERE: Mark Woolley Gallery, 120 N.W. Ninth Ave., Suite 210

HOURS: 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Tuesdays-Saturdays

CLOSING: Aug. 30

ADMISSION: Free

Julia Stoops

WHERE: Nine Gallery, 1231 N.W. Hoyt St.

HOURS: Noon-5 p.m. Wednesdays-Saturdays

CLOSING: Aug. 30

ADMISSION: Free

House of images

Entering the Nine Gallery this month can force you to wonder whether your vision is correct.

You look at what's on the walls, then in the corners, then along the edge of the doorway at an arid, mountainous panorama unfolding before you. Four sets of concentric circles mark the planetary paths of the solar system, and a larger-than-life figure spans a good part of one wall. Visual perception shifts dramatically depending on your location in the space. The room plays tricks on you.

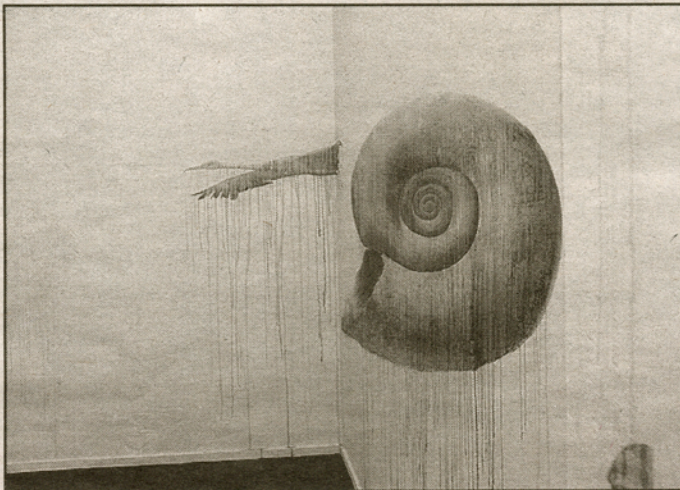
The painting, by Julia Stoops, is made directly on the walls and will disappear at the end of the month. It forces you to take a stand — actually, two. Stand on one dot in a corner of the room, and what at first looked to be the oval rings of planetary orbits actually become circles. Stand on the other dot at the room's opposite corner and two sections of an image bisected by the doorway come together to form a picture of a child powerfully hoisting a blue orb with the authority of a deity.

Stoops has catalyzed the space in an astonishing and effective way, allowing the viewer to interact playfully in a mythical environment. The images appear to be rooted in history, but a history that has no clearly defined origin.

The child is of some ancient but undefinable race. Symbolically placed nearby are a giant nautilus shell and two phoenixlike birds. The solar system mappings recall pre-Copernican calculations of the universe seen with the Earth at its center.

Stoops has allowed the translucent colors of paint to drip down the walls, contrasting the precision of her draftsmanship with spontaneity.

Stoops reminds us that if science had not pointed us in a new direction, we might still believe such mappings. All of the painting's elements seem swept into one big vortex of existence. In this life cycle, you can't see the whole thing because of your point of view.



MELVIN JACKSON/The Oregonian

A giant nautilus is part of Julia Stoops' installation at Nine Gallery.