

Silvermine

Contact: Gwen North Reiss
pr@silvermineart.org
1037 Silvermine Road
New Canaan, CT 06840
www.silvermineart.org

Exhibition at Silvermine Explores Majesty and Mortality

Rick Shaefer Three Trees: Life-Size Drawings



VAN BREEMS OAK, 2012, Charcoal on vellum mounted on aluminum, five panels, 60" x 224" overall

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Installation view of Rick Shaefer's "Van Breems Oak."

NEW CANAAN, CT, Feb. 7, 2019—On Feb. 16, Rick Shaefer's solo exhibition, "Three Trees: Life-Size Drawings," will open at Silvermine in the Vassos Gallery. Shaefer was Best in Show in Silvermine's *Art of the Northeast*, and this solo exhibition is a result of that honor.

Rick Shaefer draws with charcoal—using a language of mark-making that is defined, gestural, and rhythmic—to create life-sized images on vellum paper. The richness of detail, reminiscent of Rembrandt's etchings or Durer's woodcuts, imbues the work with a resonant stillness and dignity. Shaefer says of his technique: "I do not use the charcoal in the classic manner with rubbing and smudging the tones and erasing to bring back highlights. My technique resembles the look of etching, engraving, lino or woodcut in that each line is distinct, and tone is gained by crosshatching or scribbling. The intent is to highlight the act of drawing, the myriad decisions made of putting down each mark in succession."

The three trees in this exhibition give full rein to Shaefer's fascination with the majesty and the ponderous bulk of these fallen Oaks and the exquisite complexity of the underside of the pulled-up Sycamore stump: views that we might pass by without notice

if they were not pulled from their surroundings and placed directly before us. In isolated stillness these drawings communicate with us in a palpable way.

There is a strong 16th and 17th century Dutch, Flemish and German influence running through his landscape and botanical drawings. In Shaefer's words, "I spent a good portion of my formative years living in northern Europe and I think the mood of this artistic genre, with its operatic skies and windy vistas, resonates with me still. Much of the Dutch still-life and landscape art tradition is permeated with symbolism and imbued with narratives that transcend the actual scene depicted. Many are *memento mori* pieces, meant as reflections on mortality and the transient nature of existence." Beyond their stylistic bravura, Shaefer's drawings interrogate the ties that bind the natural and human worlds.

Rick Shaefer's work has been exhibited throughout the U.S. A Fairfield resident, he was awarded Best in Show in *Art of the Northeast* at Silvermine in 2017. This solo exhibition runs concurrently with *ReFRAMING Aging: Health, Happiness and the Arts* and will be on view through March 23.

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Silvermine Arts Center is one of the oldest artist communities in the United States. Its 5-acre campus in New Canaan, Connecticut, consists of a nationally renowned artist guild, an award-winning school of art offering classes for all ages, an arts and fine crafts shop, and a gallery offering over twenty contemporary and historic exhibitions annually. Silvermine is a non-profit 501c3 organization that also offers an Outreach Education Program, Art Partners, and hosts lectures, film screenings, and special events. Silvermine Galleries are open six days a week from 12 to 5pm and by appointment Friday. For more information, call (203) 966-9700 ext. 20 or visit the website: www.silvermineart.org.



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