



ART

Science and art align in Fortescue exhibit at Vessel

Pareidolia: n., the seeing of content and intent where none actually exists, e.g., faces in the moon or on grilled cheese sandwiches.

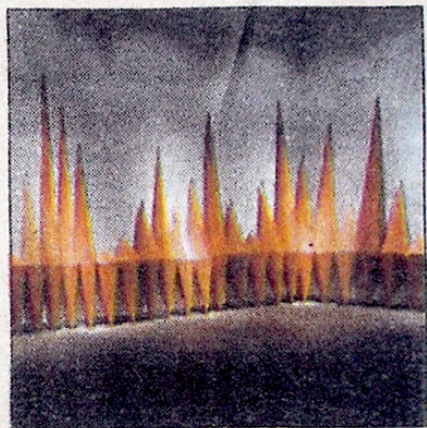
It's also the title of a solo show by Donald Fortescue, scientist turned artist, who balances scientific objectivity with artistic subjectivity. His interactive installation, digital prints, and video are hybrid syntheses of those conflicting, complementary sensibilities; if we assume science and art to be separate, antithetical cultures (even in the digital age), the two cultural worlds do rotate sometimes, as here, into miraculous alignments.

On his blog, Fortescue discusses the commonalities shared by science and art: "Detailed close-up ▶6

5 ◀ images dissolve on close inspection, revealing their fractal qualities . . . Similar fractal qualities are also revealed in the digital and physical processes used in creating the work."

Between 2011 and 2013, Fortescue traveled to Iceland, Australia, Colorado, and California, as well as to Philadelphia, home of the oldest botanical garden in the country, in conjunction with artist residencies. Gallerist Lonnie Lee: Fortescue "engages in the field as a naturalist: he systematically and creatively gathers materials . . . such as tree branches to whittle and carve, or makes recordings, documents and photos to take back to the studio—to study, experiment with, and sculpt into visual and aural artworks."

If outdoor rambles recall Andy Goldsworthy's twig-and-boulder ephemera or Robert Smithson's "non-site" rocks ensconced within mirrored boxes, Fortescue enriches the radical Land Art ethos with permanence and poetry. His installation, "On the Level," composed of scores of recycled redwood spindle forms of varying heights, their maximum diameters aligned, suggests the forest growth cycles as well as EEG-like pulses. The "Maculata" (Latin for stains?) digital prints, subtle abstractions based on dappled bark, and the dried leaves, termite/woodpecker holes and cellulose strands of "Baer Triptych #1"



ON THE LEVEL BY DONALD FORTESCUE

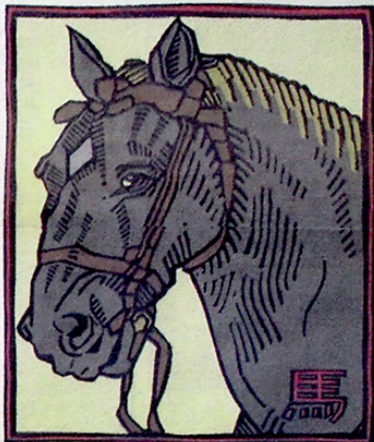
Science and nature.

also disclose the stunning beauty of natural processes.

Artist talk, Saturday, Feb. 8, 2–3:30 p.m. *Pareidolia* runs through Feb. 22; Vessel Gallery, 471 25th St., Oakland; 510-893-8800; Vessel-Gallery.com. —DeWitt Cheng

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