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Dual exhibition offers art lovers something magical

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Artwork by Rachael McCampbell is featured in dual exhibition at Joanne Artman Gallery, 326 N. Coast Hwy. *COURTESY PHOTO*

Art lovers are in for something magical – the dual exhibition of mixed media art of Patrick Maisano and paintings of Rachael McCampbell. Entitled "Wild Thing," both artists create real and imaginary animal-based work that lifts us high up in spirit and in imagination.

How fortuitous it is that the movie, based on the book by Maurice Sendak, "Where the Wild Things Are" has been released at this time. Maisano seems a kindred spirit with Sendak. His imaginary people and creatures are dream-like, a fantasy world of contradictions – an adult state of mind, with a child's innocence. Dragons and beasts, bears, elephants, mixed with original creatures that are at once friendly and sacred, frightening and profane. McCampbell also envisions the world through a poet's eyes. She, however, favors images that reach to great heights, ethereal states of mind. Her depictions of people, birds, and horses, leap up to the stratosphere, as McCampbell shows symbolically the elevated existence humans seek.

Maisano, like McCampbell, finds the intersection between myth and symbolism. His imaginary figures are spellbinding. As adults, we are not used to enjoying pictures that might be called "child-like," yet we cannot help but relish his dark characters who remind us of youthful dreams and heroic beings. They take us away from the mundane and feed our undernourished imaginations. Maisano states that: "I paint in an attempt to create a beautiful object; an object that resonates with some quality of soul or magic." The artist, therefore, works with great ardor, seeking to infuse his work with an enigmatic beauty. The work is mystical, bordering on religious iconography and fairytale imagery as Maisano portrays the mystery of existence – the unknown and yet the real – making it far more wonderful than can be imagined. His paintings are often colorless, a mixture of shades of grays that give each image – a solitary creature, a huddling together of beasts, a desolate area, humans or fabled characters – a sense of yesteryear. By minimizing color to largely black and white, it is as if Maisano returns to a time gone by, a figment of a past we have forgotten, or perhaps never knew.

In some paintings, Maisano playfully adds floating stylized circles and squares that dance above the scene as they enliven each picture with further dimensionality. Maisano's art is always celebratory. Like a book by Sendak, it takes us to a soothing, haunting and joyful place where we strip away pretense and become real. No wonder Maisano's art has been featured in several films and is exhibited in prestigious venues, such as the Bakersfield Museum of Art.

McCampbell originally comes from Tennessee and now divides her time between Los Angeles and Nashville, big city living and the quiet of horse farms and nature. Her ethereal paintings often start out as a vivid dream she records in her journal. Taking parts of the dream, the journal, and sketches, McCampbell pieces together these fragments to create an original work of art. As she paints, the imagery evolves, but is always emotive-based, with lots of texture, splashes of color, and sanding of surface and building up of image. Her original sketches change throughout the process and inspiration takes over as animals become an allegory for the human condition. "As Above so Below" depicts horses running on the bottom of the canvas with lightly drawn paint and hooves above them in the sky. Thus, McCampbell reflects on our existence; that if everything is connected and is part of everything else, then heaven and earth could possibly co-exist...if only we would look.

In February, McCampbell will have a solo show at the Parthenon Museum in Nashville. It will be about women in mythology, huge figurative paintings, depicting important moments in the story women.

Visit the Joanne Artman Gallery, 326 N. Coast Highway, 949-510-5481, www.joanartmangallery.com. Also visit: www.maisano.com, and www.rachaelmccampbell.com.