

OPINION

## Two Exhibits Stir, Soothe

By Jennifer Landes



Durell Godfrey Photos

Jane Martin brings a transcendental sensibility to her still images in the exhibit "Reckoning and Rapture" at Guild Hall Museum.

At a time of giving and sharing, Guild Hall Museum in East Hampton has a bit of everything to ride out the rest of the holiday season. In one gallery, a show of collectibles features Depression glass, decoys, quilts, and shooting-gallery targets. In another, the still images and a video installation by Jane Martin dominate.

Ms. Martin's images conflate the human figure with water and nature, overlaying and comparing patterns found in all of the elements to make what appears to be a larger spiritual statement. Calling the show "Reckoning and Rapture" only underscores this theme.

The richly textured photographs predominantly depict the female form as well as ocean waves. There are stills from both 2005 and 2008, which have a forest theme, where a female figure abstractly mimics the trees she stands among.

The signs in the gallery admonish viewers not to touch the work, but one can see how the rich finish and tactile expression would prompt someone to want a more direct interaction with the work.

Fog, mist, and steam make for a moody and murky setting dominated by the angular forms in their midst.

In an essay for the exhibit, Janet Goleas compares the artist to Andrei Tarkovsky, a Russian filmmaker who shared a similar transcendental sensibility.

Often the close-ups of the hands and other body parts of her figures are reminiscent of Alfred Stieglitz's portraits of Georgia O'Keefe. And even while those photographs depicted a force of nature through the eyes of an artist who considered his subject his equal, something about Ms. Martin's gaze makes her female subjects stronger, even when the setting would make them appear more vulnerable.

The various and sometimes convoluted poses in the photos are reminiscent of a mechanical fascination with the human body and bravura depictions such as in the battle cartoons of Leonardo and Michelangelo, or the motion studies of Eadweard Muybridge.

In "Reveal," the one video piece in the show, fog becomes steam and moisture on glass, then waves and patterns on the sand. In this impressionistic treatment, easily recognizable forms, such as a nipple, take on more universal and symbolic qualities, perhaps an orb that could be a planet, a star, or the sun.

Ms. Martin's art, which is so reliant on nature and our understanding of it, still manages to be mysterious and surreal. "The Eye," from 2001, has a very literal surreal quality about it and its placement above the video work is inspired.

The exhibit has an otherworldly air that viewers may find refreshing after too much of the holidays and the current bleakness of the economy.

... Although both shows are completely different in nature, each causes the viewer to pause and reassess the common and everyday. The exhibits are on view through Jan. 18.