

## Linked in landscape

Ever see a group show by one of those “intertwined networks” of painters who studied in graduate school under certain influential teachers before going their separate ways? Put together thoughtfully, such a show can deliver lots of insights.

Gross McCleaf Gallery is offering “The Landscape Abstracted,” featuring eight area painters, five of whom have fairly recent master of fine arts degrees from Penn, and two who studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Looking around the show, it’s easy to spot some truly remarkable talent among people whose work is dissimilar, yet somehow visually interconnected.

Unhesitatingly, I’d say the show’s most impressive works are by Susan Ziegler and Eric Huckabee, who seem at opposite poles from each other stylistically at first glance, she Penn-trained, he at PAFA. Ziegler’s single, very large, awesome landscape painting *Promise of Escape* has key elements both pictorially and emotionally. There’s unity of color and atmosphere and something enigmatic



**Eric Huckabee’s** “Morning Fog, Running With Joan,” in the exhibit “The Landscape Abstracted” at Gross McCleaf.

about it. At the same time, it engages our eyes, giving us entrance into this panoramic scene that stretches into the far distance, so we’re slow to take our gaze away from it. And even then,

the image stays in our mind long after. Something highly unusual has been achieved, a fine balance between the specific and the abstract.

Alexis Serio’s landscapes seem close to Ziegler’s in containing large areas of saturated color and bands of evocative color that flow and mutate, drawing our eye toward the deep distance. Naomi Chung, by contrast, portrays hefty fractured flower forms across a surface.

Eric Huckabee, an academy master of fine arts and nonetheless this show’s dedicated abstractionist, enjoys an enthusiastic early following. He wants abstract painting to be understood as a kind of constructed fiction directly experienced from a real response to relationships. Huckabee achieves particular distinction in several paintings that balance description and abstraction through the unifying means of color in ways that make a serious bid for originality. Other exhibitors are Martha Armstrong, Marlene Rye, Jenny Hager, and Pete Zebley.

Gross McCleaf Gallery, 127 S. 16th St.  
To June 29. Tue-Fri 10-5. 215-665-8138.