

Pittsburgh City Paper

ART REVIEWS + FEATURES

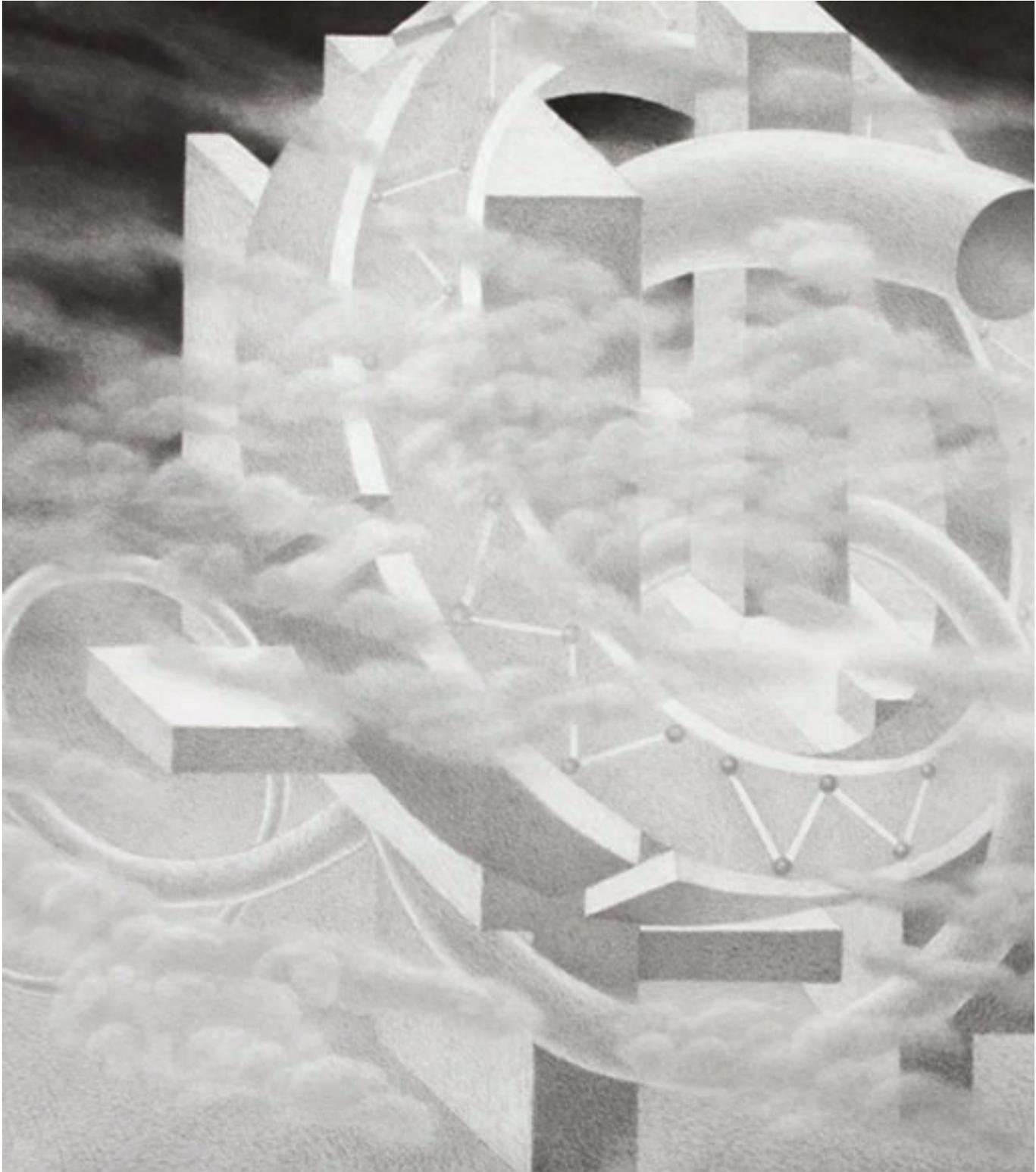
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ARTS » ART REVIEWS + FEATURES

Eclectic Gallerie Chiz highlights work by Caroline Bagenal and Don Dugal.

Bagenal's abstract sculptures and Dugal's sometimes-surreal drawings comprise *Nature & the Metaphysical*.

by [Nadine Wasserman](#)



Don Dugal's "Vantongerloo at Wilmerding."

It's always surprised me that there are so few commercial galleries in Pittsburgh. While it's not uncommon for mid-sized cities to lack a robust art trade, Pittsburgh is so culturally rich that it seems it could support more than a few. While commercial galleries are not the only key to a thriving visual-art scene, the Art Fair phenomenon has made them essential features of the current art "market." To quote critic A.O. Scott in a recent New York Times article, "money is now an important measure — maybe the supreme measure — of artistic accomplishment." Because the current market-driven system favors recognizable names, commercial ventures tend to avoid under-recognized or experimental work. But commercial galleries both support and exhibit artists, making them essential components of that system. And many of them do show under-the-radar artists who deserve our attention.

Housing a unique and eclectic mish-mash of mediums and styles, Shadyside's Gallerie Chiz is a far cry from a pristine white-cube gallery. Its owner/director, Ellen Chisdes Neuberg, displays paintings, drawings, jewelry, ceramics and the odd three-dimensional creature in one big cacophonous floor-to-ceiling array. And there are definite gems amidst the clutter. In addition, Neuberg has carved out a traditional white-walled space in the middle of her gallery to showcase specific artists for her monthly changing exhibitions. The current exhibition, Nature & the Metaphysical, includes sculptures by Caroline Bagenal and drawings by Don Dugal.

Although Bagenal often creates large-scale sculptures,

on display here are smaller, delicate abstracts from her Marsh Poems series. Made from bamboo and marsh reeds wrapped in paper from books and magazines, the pieces were inspired by the manmade objects she sees on walks near her Massachusetts home. One is a tiny cage painted an iridescent Yves Klein blue, another a jumble of cast-off sailing rope.

While many of Dugal's drawings also reflect his surroundings, they often spill into the surreal while exploring the range of shades and textures possible with charcoal. "Nitelites," a nighttime landscape of a tree-covered hill, teeters on the edge of abstraction, while "Polar Reversal" combines both recognizable and abstract components.

Using different mediums and methods, both Bagenal and Dugal strive for that transcendent space between realism and abstraction, temporality and the sublime.