

TOUCHSTONEGALLERY

Steve Alderton's **ICONS**

at TOUCHSTONE GALLERY March 1-31, 2013

Preview: February 27 and 28, 11-6 pm

Opening Reception: Friday, March 1, 6-8:30 pm

Artisan cocktails and select non-alcoholic teas provided by DC-based [Capital Kombucha](#); Janelle Gill on keyboard

Third Thursday: March 21, 6-8:30 pm



For D.C.-based artist Steve Alderton, the human subjects of **ICONS**, his new figurative series exhibiting at the Touchstone Gallery, are less like realistic representations than they are loose components of a still life painting. Alderton strips his subjects down; the nonessential is cast off, the self is bared whole. As a result, subjects rendered impressionistic in paints transcend the merely visual to reveal what Alderton the artist believes is the human essence: *form and spirit*.



Alderton's dynamic series of new figurative paintings is influenced by the icons of Eastern Christianity (the word "Icon" is Greek for *likeness* or *image*.) He focuses on how the sacred, minimalistic works manage to convey – with just the slightest suggestion – complex aspects of the subject's persona, spirit, and earthly accomplishments. With that in mind, like in the case of icons, he sought to capture the total *likeness* of a subject. Seemingly insignificant traits – the way a mouth turns up ever so slightly into a smile; the intensity of an eye's focus – serve to enlighten the viewer in profound ways. Alderton secularized and modernized the iconographic imagery, but preserved the icon's power to reveal the complex inner self through roughhewn means.

One canvas from the series, *Icon No. 49*, shows a female head depicted in serene lavenders and lilacs; her reddish hair combed neatly off of her face. She looks coquettishly over her right shoulder; her expression warm, lovely. The viewer knows that this is a kind, sympathetic and beautiful woman, yet Alderton skillfully communicates all this with artful minimalism and the most spartan of detail. Form and spirit are wed under the artist's brushstrokes.

Alderton's interest in icons extends to their *symbolic imagery*, in the form of seemingly random objects accompanying the central figure. A tiny lamb, gold earrings, velvet drapes, and other ephemera served to illustrate the nature, position and goodwill of the individual. Even different colors had esoteric meanings. In *Icon No. 7*, the subject is juxtaposed against bold, multi-colored fretwork. For the viewer, the hues, shapes, and textures of the background may suggest a non-objective city scape or the panes of a stained glass window. Both interpretations would serve to unmask very different traits about the subject and what kind of life she might have led.

ICONS includes studies of the human form ranging from portraits to full-body nudes. Some of the images were borne out of imagination, and others from models. Consequently, Alderton and Timothy Johnson, the other solo Touchstone artist featured in the March 2013 exhibition, modeled for each other and both works will appear in the show.

Steve Alderton has exhibited in numerous group and solo shows throughout the Washington, D.C., area. His works reside in both private and corporate collections.

Imagery from **ICONS** can be found at the Touchstone Gallery website, http://www.touchstonegallery.com/Artists/Alderton/Alderton_ICons.html
Images: *Icon No. 7, Icon No. 9, Icon No. 49, Acrylic by Steve Alderton*



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