

UPCOMING SHOW

Up to 15 works on show

April 4 – 30, 2007

Arden Gallery

129 Newbury St

Boston, MA 02116

(617) 247-0610

● SHOW LOCATION BOSTON, MA

FRED WESSEL



Renaissance wonder

The grace and beauty of early Renaissance master Fra Angelico continue to inspire the contemporary egg tempera and gold leaf work of Fred Wessel, who travels frequently to Assisi, Florence and Rome in order to renew his connection with this glorious past.

"In 1984 I went to Italy and found myself at the Ufizi in front of a Botticelli painting and I just thought that we had lost touch with that beauty, that idea of preciousness," says Wessel. "So I really started drawing and researching and looking in to egg tempera and gold leaf and incorporating it into my work."

Some pieces, however, will always be inspiring for Wessel, no matter how much he studies and learns about them.

"Fra Angelico still confounds me," says Wessel. "Those angel wings seem to actually flutter when you walk across the room. I'm amazed every time I see them. I believe that in our search for novelty in post-modernist art making, we often lose touch with certain basics: beauty, grace, harmony and visual poetry are nowadays rarely considered important criteria in evaluating contemporary works of art."

And, while some artists might not embrace the idea of preciousness in their work, Wessel sees it as an often ignored and even forgotten element in art making that needs to be reconsidered by contemporary understandings.

"Since the Bauhaus, the term 'precious' has had a negative connotation in art schools," says Wessel. "It was a term used derisively in the 1960's to describe work that did not adhere to the fashionably pared down kernels of conceptualism or minimalism."

Wessel uses the gold leaf under the rich colors of his figures as a way to deepen the experience of viewing the painting while also creating something



CHRISTIE, EGG TEMPERA WITH GOLD LEAF, LAPIS LAZULI AND MOONSTONES, 18 x 14"

I use the gold and lapis gems as decorative background support for the figure. The red bole, under the gold, is rubbed through to give an aged finish.

that will stand as an object of beauty. He adds to this by using moonstones and lapis lazuli directly on the canvas in a similar way that some of the Renaissance painters incorporated precious stones into their work.

"I realize that, as artists, we may have abandoned too much," says Wessel. "The ever-changing inner light that radiates from gold leaf used

judiciously on the surface of a painting, and the use of pockets of rich, intense colors that illuminate the picture's surface impressed me deeply. It was 'preciousness' elevated to grand heights: semi-precious gems such as lapis lazuli, malachite, azurite, etc., were ground up, mixed with egg yolk and applied as paint pigments, producing dazzling, breathtaking colors!



BECCA (TELESCOPE), EGG TEMPERA WITH GOLD AND PALLADIUM LEAF, 24 X 30"

This painting is another in the above series using a John Fortin star chart in the background. Becca is wearing her mother's nightgown.

BECCA(TUSCANY), EGG TEMPERA WITH GOLD AND PALLADIUM LEAF, 6 X 9"
This is another portrait of Becca using the gold and palladium as decorative background support for the figure.

The Gallery Says . . .
 “These highly refined portraits of young women dressed in medieval and contemporary fashion reveal an unadulterated commitment by Wessel to the traditionally difficult media. Wessel’s patience and skill render magnificent, light-infused paintings. Each acutely precise work depicts an alluring figure cloaked in rich atmosphere.”
 — Zola Solamente,
 Director, Arden Gallery



Wessel makes further nods to this history by painting his figures holding early scientific equipment, like a sundial or a telescope, and incorporating early ideas and understandings of the natural world into each canvas. Several of the paintings in this new series include 18th century star charts as backgrounds and, in one painting, the model is painted while wearing an 18th century gown from a Paris opera house borrowed from his college’s Costume Department.
 “The charts of the constellations are drawn into the gold and the lines of latitude and longitude I use as grid lines,” says Wessel. “And the tools I pick

up in little places along the way. I’m also inspired by Portuguese tiles and some of the designs you find on them. I travel to Portugal and gather the tiles there to use as reference.”
 Collectors are naturally drawn to Wessel’s work not only through the sheer beauty of the objects, but also through the solid craftsmanship that goes into them.
 “It took me a good amount of time to learn these 14th century processes and I think people value that,” says Wessel. “Besides my vision, I also think there is a spirit in the work that people respond to as well as an understanding of the craftsmanship involved.” ●

For a direct link to the exhibiting gallery go to 
www.americanartcollector.com

Price Range Indicator			
Our at-a-glance Price Range Indicator shows what you can expect to pay for this artist's work.			
	Small	Medium	Large
1995	\$2,500	\$3,800	\$14,000
2000	\$4,000	\$7,500	\$20,000
2006	\$6,000	\$15,000	\$35,000



BECCA (SUNDIAL), EGG TEMPERA WITH GOLD AND PALLADIUM LEAD, 24 X 30"

Becca is wearing a gown made by her grandmother. Tooled in the gilded field is a detail of an antique star chart from a 1753 engraving by John Flamsteed. The chart of the constellations is a drawing in the gold field playing off the realism of the figure.