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Voyager 41



Birdsong #2



Dreams #7



Landscape 08.01

## Luc Leestemaker

Landscapes go ethereal

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Special Correspondent

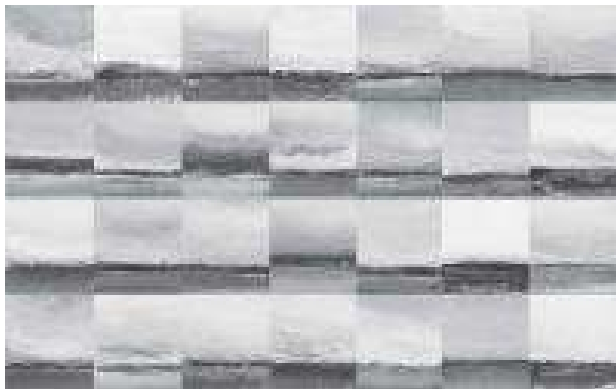
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There is a mysterious sense of familiarity in the abstract paintings of Dutch-American painter Luc Leestemaker. A retrospective of his work is being shown at Galerie Sono starting Thursday.

The mystique is slowly undone by connecting the visual dots, or paintings, in this show.

Leestemaker's focal point is the traditional landscape, clearly seen in his installation, "Earth Songs," 45 small landscape paintings hung as a cohesive group.

With landscapes as a springboard, Leestemaker's work takes off from there, first as a recognizable variation on a theme, then as a radical expression abstracted from that theme.



Earth Songs

The landscape is an art genre steeped in a history that connects Leestemaker with his Dutch predecessors. "When I look at the Dutch masters like Rembrandt and Vermeer, I learn a lot from the light," says Leestemaker. "It's information that's built in to me."

While his Dutch heritage inspired him, it also became the catalyst that would radically change his artistic approach and his work. When he left Holland for the United States in 1990, it signified a symbolic break for Leestemaker, not only emotionally, but aesthetically.

"For me ... leaving that culture behind ...gave me a freedom," says the 51-year-old artist. "I rejected the old and focused all my energy into abstraction."

Leestemaker started painting larger canvases, seeking a style somewhere between his landscapes and abstract expressionism. But subliminally, a recognizable form was always there.

In the upcoming show, the painting "Firebird #2" is a coarse, broadly painted work with illuminated yellows and whites floating over deep blues and broad swaths of dashed blacks. Many of Leestemaker's works have a deep vibrancy yielding an inaudible but resonating hum, like "Dreams #7." Less abstract and owing more to a landscape, it is a gaseous sunset with florid goldenrods and ochres skirted with deep oranges - a startling work that stays with the viewer.



Landscape 07.01

Leestemaker withstood several life crises after moving to this country, including a divorce. One of the most near tragic experiences was almost losing the sight in one eye. Surgery saved him, but a long, difficult recovery tested Leestemaker creatively and emotionally.

"After the surgery I had to lay in hospital and keep my head down for weeks and all sense of perspective was gone. I took small canvases to work and play with. It required me to push myself all the way to the edge, to a deeper part of my creativity."

One of the fruits of struggling to recover was "Earth Songs," but it was also a transition point for the artist who again, started to embrace landscapes.

"I was confident enough using the old traditions, using the past tools, to build the new. The small works were inspired by that period."

The 40 pieces in the show represent 20 years of Leestemaker's oeuvre, and the viewer can easily track the different "eras" flowing from one into the other. "It's like an artist's journal of all those different periods."

Leestemaker's paintings are exhibited and collected throughout the United States and abroad. The Los Angeles-based artist has collaborated with Hollywood's film and television industries on projects including "Spider-Man," "Bringing Down the House," "Erin Brockovich," "Spider-Man III" and "Boston Legal." His work is on the cover of composer/musician Charlie Haden's 2005 Grammy Award-winning CD, "Land of the Sun."



Jerusalem



Firebird #2



Map of the Wind #14



Voyager 60

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The retrospective of Luc Leestemaker's work opens at Galerie Sono, 135 Washington St., Norwalk, Thursday, and will run through May 25. The public is invited to meet the artist at an opening reception on Saturday, May 17, beginning at 6 p.m. Gallery hours are Tuesday-Thursday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; Friday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-9 p.m.; Sunday, noon-5 p.m. Call 831-8332 or visit [www.sonogalerie.com](http://www.sonogalerie.com).