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Rendering Nature - Ephemera

Rick Shaefer: Rendering Nature

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## Rick Shaefer: Rendering Nature Press Release

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**September 18, 2014 – December 19, 2014**  
***Rick Shaefer: Rendering Nature***  
**Bellarmino Museum of Art, Fairfield University**

FAIRFIELD, Conn. (July 18, 2014). **Fairfield University's Bellarmino Museum of Art** presents its newest exhibition, ***Rick Shaefer: Rendering Nature***, on view **September 18, 2014 through December 19, 2014**. **An opening reception, free and open to the public, takes place on Thursday, September 18, 2014, from 6 to 8 p.m.** Connecticut-based artist Rick Shaefer is best known for his remarkable works in charcoal on vellum. Inspired directly by the textural richness of the natural world as well as the communicative power of "the line," Shaefer gravitates towards subjects that are as visually compelling as they are intellectually engaging. Massive oak trees felled by the forces of nature and magisterial creatures, including the American Bison and Indian Rhinoceros, reflect his profound interest in the capacity of bold mark-marking to evoke the visual patterns of our lived environment. They equally speak to his stated interest in the powerful intersection of the human and the natural worlds and the resulting dialogues – historical, mythological, and anthropomorphic – to which these collisions give rise. Shaefer's charcoal drawings will be complemented by more than a dozen of his cloud paintings, many of which have never been exhibited publicly before and several of which were painted specifically for the Bellarmino's main gallery.

Raised primarily in Europe, Shaefer studied at Duke University, where he first engaged with painting. He continued his education at the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, Calif., where he focused on photography. Following a successful career in commercial photography and editorial work, Shaefer – who found he was increasingly drawn to drawing and painting – decided to devote himself to these disciplines in 1994. His experience as a photographer, however, left an indelible mark on Shaefer, whose artistic sensibilities reflect a fascination with

texture and line that is closely aligned with black and white photography and its privileging of tonal contrasts.

Among Shaefer's other key sources of artistic inspiration are the etchings, engravings, and woodcuts of Northern European Old Masters, including Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-69) and Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528). He has also been influenced by the drawings of the American illustrator and cartoonist R. Crumb (b. 1943), who – like the Old Masters – relies on a confident and bold line in his work. This same confidence resonates in the work of Shaefer, who has stated, with regard to his own *oeuvre*: “I tend to always come back to the line work. I find what I respond to and admire in other artists' work, past or present, is usually the integrity of the line – whether it's a single stroke or a mass of scribble in the shadows. If the marks are put down with validity and assurance they will resonate and the piece will vibrate. False or uneasy notes stand out and unsettle and even demoralize. A confident fluidity of movement and gesture is what is consciously and unconsciously felt and appreciated by the viewer.”

Such gestural boldness is clear in Shaefer's works in charcoal on vellum. In these pieces, the artist very consciously refrains from stumping and smudging, relying instead on the lines themselves to create field of depth, contour, and shadow. This same audacity is apparent in his cloud studies, though the resolution of these works is entirely different. Painted in oil on linen in muted, often monochromatic tones, these pieces feature loose but determined brushstrokes. Cumulus clouds erupt across Shaefer's canvases, dazzling the viewer with their bravura and foregrounding the sublime power of nature. The English landscape painter John Constable comes immediately to mind when one regards these pieces, including Shaefer's mosaic of twelve 11”-by-14” studies on canvas board. Constable's colleague and rival J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851) is equally conjured by these studies, which are marked by a textural richness and a visceral impact.

Shaefer has exhibited widely throughout the greater New York City metro region and New England as well as in Louisiana and in Western Europe. His works are held in a number of private and corporate collections, including Microsoft, American Express, Prudential, Goleb Enterprises, Michael Lynne, Arthur G. Rosen, and United Yarn.

This exhibition will be accompanied by an illustrated brochure with an essay contributed by Dr. Jill Deupi, Director and Chief Curator of University Museums at Fairfield University. Several complementary events have also been planned to enhance this show, including a gallery talk by the artist October 29 at 5 p.m. In addition, a special **Family Day**, sponsored by Morris Media Group and inspired by Shaefer's works, will take place on Saturday, October 4, 2014, from 1 to 4 p.m. in the Bellarmine Museum. This event, which is free and open to the public, will focus on "Art & Animals." Museum galleries will be open to the general public between noon and 5 p.m. on this same Saturday.

**The Bellarmine Museum of Art** is open Monday through Friday, 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and on select Saturdays from noon to 5 p.m. Admission is always free. For more information, call the Bellarmine Museum of Art at (203) 254-4046, or visit [www.fairfield.edu/museum](http://www.fairfield.edu/museum). The Bellarmine Museum of Art is located in Bellarmine Hall on the campus of Fairfield University, 1073 North Benson Road in Fairfield, Connecticut.

*Fairfield University is a Jesuit University, rooted in one of the world's oldest intellectual and spiritual traditions. More than 5,000 undergraduate and graduate students from 36 states, 47 foreign countries, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico are enrolled in the University's five schools. In the spirit of rigorous and sympathetic inquiry into all dimensions of human experience, Fairfield welcomes students from diverse backgrounds to share ideas and engage in open conversations. The University is located in the heart of a region where the future takes shape, on a stunning campus on the Connecticut coast just an hour from New York City.*

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