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Contact: Sarah Traver: sarah@travergallery.com;
or Grace Meils: grace@travergallery.com

August/September at Traver Gallery – Tacoma

Mark Bennion: *Kalevala*

***Pilchuck Glass School: Celebrating 40 Years* Group Exhibition**

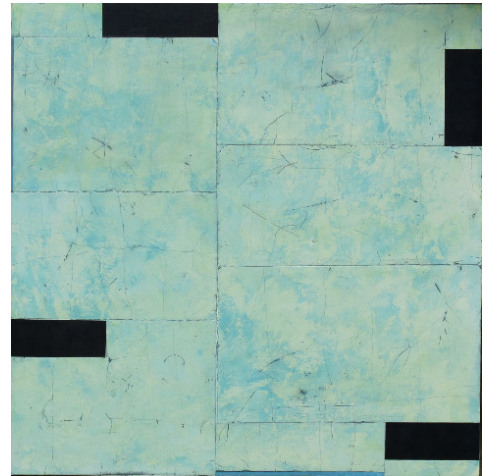
Exhibition Runs: July 30 – September 11, 2011

Artists' Reception: Sunday, August 7, 2011, 1 – 4 pm

Mark Bennion: *Kalevala*

Traver Gallery-Tacoma is pleased to present *Kalevala*, a solo exhibition featuring a selection of new fresco paintings and steel sculptures by Vashon Island artist Mark Bennion. Minimalist in appearance, the shapes and markings in Bennion's work are more archetypal than abstract – they are instinctual and emotional, conveying what the artist refers to as a “ancient innocence.”

Kalevala refers to an ancient collection of Finnish songs and poems, the opening line of which invites the reader to celebrate learning and the passing on of tradition: “While the young ones are standing round us of the rising generation, let them learn the words of our magic, and recall our songs and legends.” Bennion's new work is a continued exploration of a theme that has long interested him: the thread between ancient and contemporary culture.



Following in the tradition of Northwest artists such as Mark Tobey, Paul Horiuchi, Morris Graves and William Ivey, all of whom shared an affinity for painting on paper as well as a deep reverence for eastern art, Bennion sees his frescoes as a “confluence of eastern and western techniques and traditions.” Like the Frescos of Pompeii, Bennion's paintings themselves convey a sense of history and tradition – the cracked plaster surface, layered with various pigments and ink are reminiscent of the richly colored walls that adorned homes, temples, and churches throughout the Mediterranean. Unlike these traditional works in plaster and pigment, Bennion's paintings are deliberately cracked and scratched, each mark a record of the paintings' creation.

A practicing Buddhist for much of his adult life, Bennion is not as concerned with the specific story each painting or sculpture tells, as the moment of inner peace and meditation he hopes they inspire within the viewer. Writer Michael Meade poetically describes Bennion's frescoes as “paint and plaster that fix little moments on paper, like moments that the inner mind knows in solitude, that allow meanings to enter or escape,” in his article *Wordless Stories, The Art of Mark Bennion* from 2001.

Mark Bennion has shown his work across the United States, Canada and Europe since 1968. He has recently exhibited at the Museum of Glass in Tacoma as well as the Museum of Northwest Art in La Conner. In addition to painting and sculpture Bennion also creates large-scale installation work.

Located on Tacoma's Thea Foss Waterway and adjacent to the Museum of Glass, Traver Gallery is among the nation's premier exhibition spaces for contemporary studio glass, painting, sculpture, and installation art. Gallery hours are Wednesday – Saturday 10 – 6 and Sunday 12 – 5. For more information, please call (253) 383-3685 or visit our website at www.travergallery.com