

Art

Super-realist Creates Magic With Paint

By Eileen Maley

Steve Mills, who's never made a painting he didn't sell, says he is practicing to become a better artist. In his case, such a statement is modesty. Mr. Mills, who's 27 years old, is amazed at his success, grateful for all the support he gets, proud of his art and working away to make it better.

He says "I hope to improve until the day I stop painting... I am still trying to discover myself and must know myself better before expressing deep philosophical ideas. I'm 27 now and hope by the time I'm 50 to know myself well enough to paint what could one day be thought a masterpiece. All my paintings are exercises to that end."

wet and aerated sea-suds. His mud looks like mud, his sand like sand, his street scenes like photographs.

There is a brown paper and string-wrapped package on one of the antique side-tables at the gallery. The package is marked "Don't open until the opening." This observer didn't realize it was a painting, a trompe d'oeil joke, until virtually touching the canvas.

"Lifting Fog" is one of Steve Mills's new and most representative works. It shows a fisherman in a small boat, fiddling with the engine, in a seascape so misty there is no horizon, only a hint of a ripple in the water, the boat and its occupant suspended in mid-painting, finely executed, perfectly colored and lighted, a fine piece of work.



Wo Yue-Kee's tiger mixes Eastern and Western techniques.

It's amazing that a brush-stroke can turn a drop of paint into an image so familiar to the eye.

Steve Mills's work is photo-realist, medium-sized paintings done in such detail the observer cannot help but inspect the canvases up close, amazed that a brush-stroke, a brush with no more than three or four bristles, can turn a drop of paint into an image so familiar to the eye.

Steve Mills has a series of paintings on exhibit at the Granary Gallery in West Tisbury through Labor Day. As he has in the past, the young artist attracted a large crowd to his opening, and collected an impressive number of red dots (to indicate sales) within a few hours.

His Island paintings are more than promising; this young man has already surpassed many of his contemporaries.

Another fine painter at the Granary Gallery this week and next is Henry Wo Yue-Kee, whose Chinese watercolors are as different as they can be from the works of Steve Mills.

Mr. Wo, who was born in China and returns frequently to the far east to work and exhibit his works, combines the brushstrokes of his own country with Japanese traditions as well as Western influences. He paints clearly defined blossoms and birds or other small creatures, in

next room. They are Wo Yue-Kee's paintings of Oak Bluffs gingerbread houses, but so Chinese in approach they seem at first to be pagodas, ink-brushed behind a forceful foreground of coniferous trees. A closer look tells us they are indeed Oak Bluffs architecture, and shows how a hint of a tradition can alter our expectations.

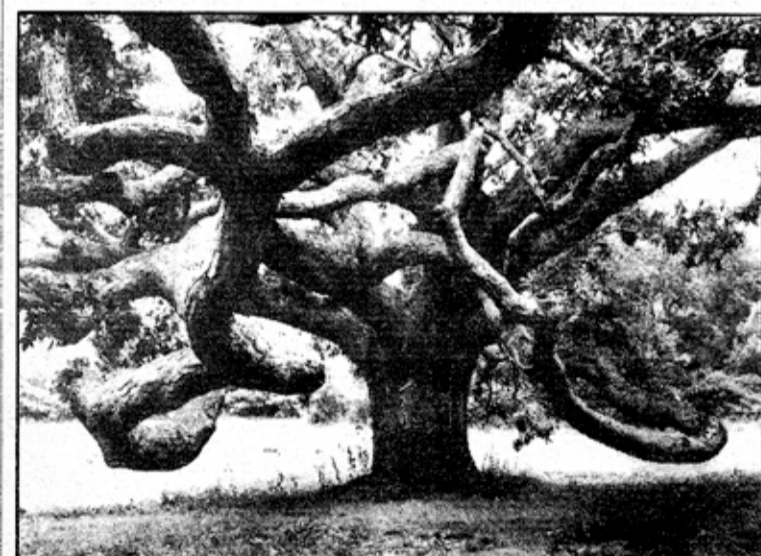
Mr. Wo's art is skillful and professional. Anyone whose image of Chinese art is that of mass-produced washes and blossoms and calligraphy, will be impressed by the difference here, by the fineness and control of his brushwork, the soft richness of his colors, the fluidity of his lines.

Not new this week, but at the Granary Gallery until the end of September, are a number of photographs from Life Magazine by the well-known artist Alfred Eisenstaedt.

For all of us old enough to remember learning about the world from the still photos of Life, it seems a rare opportunity to own a signed print of a work imbedded in memory. The collection contains a large number of Vineyard landscapes, but more interesting in many ways, is the availability of such famous photos as his "VJ Day," the exuberantly spontaneous picture of a sailor kissing a girl in Times Square, as well as his equally high spirited and memorable photo of a drum major marching across a field, followed by a parade of high-stepping children.

Newsmakers, from Einstein and Oppenheimer, to Winston Churchill making a V-sign, to Marlene Dietrich in a tuxedo, to young president John Kennedy to Joseph Goebbels to George Bernard Shaw to Bette Davis, adorn the walls of this West Tisbury gallery. The photos take us not only through Eisenstaedt's life, but our own, through the lost medium of the weekly Life Magazine.

It is no surprise that the prints are selling briskly, and that the photo of Churchill has sold as well as the North Tisbury oak tree. These photographs may not have registered as "art" when we first knew them, but it is an exceptional opportunity to acquire such a piece of history now.



ALFRED EISENSTAEDT, LIFE GALLERY OF PHOTOGRAPHY, ©TIME INC.

Alfred Eisenstaedt's view of North Tisbury oak tree.

Steve Mills's work, most of it, is Vineyard landscape, ranging from the soft aqua colors of summer water, to beach scenes, to the dark greens and muddy browns of rivers and streams, to Edgartown street scenes; landscapes covering just about every configuration of nature you might find here. He also does a cityscape and a bright pink sunset, although not as successfully.

His realism is so acute it is tempting to touch the canvas, to make sure the foam of the edge of a wave is indeed dry paint, not

a soft wash of pale color, for effects that are both fluid and peaceful.

His peacock on a blossoming limb is as much Victorian as it is Chinese, but many of his paintings are less Western, more the familiar blossom and bird combinations, delicate and restful, often round paintings in square frames, matted by softly patterned ecru Oriental paper.

Two of the paintings in this show are double-takes, similar in surprise to the "Don't Open" painting of Steve Mills's in the