

Jef Gunn

Biography

Jef Gunn was born in Seattle when it smelled of rust, cedar and low tide. He moved back to Seattle in 1980 for the rain and because he had seen paintings at the Francine Seders Gallery (by Guy Anderson, Mark Tobey, Morris Graves and others) he didn't understand, but to which his inner life awakened with memories of his boyhood in the region of Puget Sound. He has lived up and down the West Coast and now makes his home in Portland.

Legend has it his maternal grandfather was born under the floorboards during an Indian raid in 1890s Saskatchewan. His granny hailed from Scotland and was more than a little fey. His father's father was a welder, a Choctaw-Scot from Alabama who worked on bridges and who won the hand of a southern belle in Mississippi, and in the 1920s they moved their whole brood of seven to a logging camp near Spirit Lake on Mount St. Helens.

Both his parents had outsized personalities: father an adman/radio man and mother a charming lass from The Great White North. They met and married in dreamy 1950s Honolulu. Jef began his life there, and the sounds and smells of the Islands still run through him.

He studied drawing and painting in California through the 1970s, held residencies in Barcelona and Paris in the 1980s, and since the mid 1990s has engaged in a passionate study of Asian art. He began using encaustic in 1985, before there were any books or classes on it. With encaustic, he can bring together all of his other methods: papers and inks, fabric, tar, and gold. His work draws on multiple lineages of art, culture and spiritual meaning.

In September 2006, he curated "Impulse," a national show of encaustic painting and sculpture at the Portland Art Center. Gunn has participated in group exhibits at the Art Gym (Marylhurst University) and Portland Institute for Contemporary Art, and he had a solo show at Oregon State University in 1995. He has taught painting and drawing in Seattle and Portland since the middle 1990s. Gunn led a group of artists on a tour of museums, galleries and artist studios in Barcelona in 2007. He was nominated for the 2013 Northwest Artist Awards. He is represented by the William Traver Gallery in Seattle, by Cedar Street Galleries in Honolulu, and by Augen Gallery in Portland, Oregon.