

THE LOOP ART

BY KELLY RONDEAU

DR. McDREAMY

A physician-artist's haunted beauties head home

Marcus Miller, a Houston native who has lived in Portland, Ore. since 1983, has a day job, which isn't unusual for an emerging artist. Got to pay the rent somehow, right? But Miller, who makes unique and dream-like images—combinations of monotype printmaking and painting currently on display at Bering & James gallery (805 Rhode Pl., 713.524.0101)—has a rather unexpected gig. He's a medical doctor.

"Studying medicine has allowed me to understand the human anatomy more than most," he says. "It definitely has influenced my artwork, how I perceive and express the human form."

After studying art at Lee High School and summer programs at Rice University, Miller moved to Baton Rouge and earned degrees in Zoology and Biology, with a minor in Fine Arts from LSU. He went on to receive his MD from the LSU medical school and then picked up a second medical degree from the National College of Naturopathic Medicine in Portland—making him one of the few physicians to be dual-degreed and dual-board-certified in both conventional and naturopathic medicine. Miller's knowledge of both the medical and mystical are reflected in his creations.

Many of his pieces reveal the female form, with angelic undertones and muted colors that seem a nod to spirituality. "My images are inspired and influenced by every artist I've ever looked at," says Miller. "Nature and mythology are a large part. I was hugely inspired by the Art Nouveau period, as well—all the mystical characters. It's magical."

Miller's monotype-making is a fascinating process, a combination of a complex technique and no small measure of chance. Monotype prints can be created in many different ways, but the images in his new show—*Windows and Mirrors*, up through Aug. 11—were created by first rolling lithography ink and oil paints onto a metal or plexi-glass plate; then, paint brushes, rags, and Miller's own fingertips were used to add and remove ink from the plate. Next, the plate was placed against heavy rag paper, and both plate and paper rolled through a printing press. "You can't fully make it do what you want,"



ANGELS AMONG US Miller's 'Margot'

he says. "You never know what ink may move—it has a life of its own."

The doctor-artist was undiscovered among art aficionados until longtime friend, Houston arts patron Laura Randall Bacon, made a trip to see him and asked, "Where are you showing?" When Miller said nowhere, she insisted on carrying a few of his dreamy pieces home to H-Town to share with her gallery pals. Bering & James was impressed, and kicked off Miller's first exhibit there late last month.

"Marcus creates eerie, haunting and illuminating monotypes that appear to glow and float from the page," says the Bering & James' Austin James, noting that Miller's pieces are available for private showings anytime. "He has the fantastic ability to distill intellectual complexity into one simple and lovely monotype image."

The artist's biggest fan, Bacon, was also an aspiring artist back when she and Miller were in high school together. They studied under revered Texas artist Henri Gadbois. "Gadbois was a huge influence on my art," Miller explains. "He's always supported my love for the arts. We stayed in touch since the day I graduated."

For her part, Bacon says Miller's curious double life—part artist, part doc—all makes sense when you see the exhibit. "His medical training is reflected in the art work," she says. "It instantly draws one in." ■