

Fictional Planet

Imagination at Work and at Play: Science-Fiction, Fantasy, Astronomy, Horror - *J.A. Grier, Ph.D.*

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Mixing Science with Your Art, Planetary Style



"The Artist's Universe" - IAAA

Being both a lover of science and art, I find few things as enjoyable as an art exhibit that includes scientifically inspired pieces. Planetary landscapes are so evocative - it isn't surprising that a number of planetary scientists are also artists, recording their visions of other worlds not just through their research, but through art.



"Yelland and Ino"

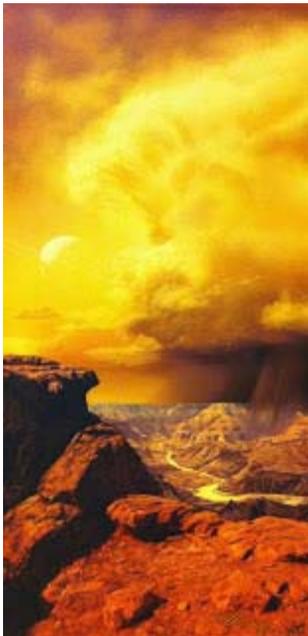
The exhibit is sponsored by the [International Association of Astronomical Artists](#), and was organized by scientist and space artist Dan Durda. The IAAA website states "Space art serves the most basic function of fine art, that of inspiration. It directs our focus toward the space frontier, where human destiny inevitably lies." More than twenty artists contributed thirty four pieces of art to the exhibit in a variety of media including pastels, watercolors, oils, and digital creations. Some of the art has a traditional 'space art' feeling, while other art moves in a different direction, using unusual materials and perspectives.



"Jovian Atmosphere"

The piece "Yelland and Ino" by Monica Aiello caught my attention immediately, being so accurate at depicting a planetary surface and so aesthetically pleasing at the same time. A close examination reveals that this is not a painting at all, but a creation of fiber and acrylic. The cracks in the surface are created by yarns and threads in straight and accurate forms. The whole is covered with a clear acrylic that mimics the icy surface of the satellite.

"Titan's Southern Summer"



I enjoyed Marilynn Flynn's "Titan's Southern Summer" for a number of reasons, one being the depiction of a canyon so like the desert southwest that I adore. But this is a frozen world of methane and ethane, with a tilted Saturn high in the murky sky.

One of the few pieces depicting alien life is Dan Durda's "Jovian Atmosphere." These jellyfish-like creatures remind me of the classic idea of 'floaters' and 'sinkers' in a giant planet's atmosphere. Many of these pieces have land and sky-scapes inspired by views of our home planet, then translated to appropriate contexts in the rest of the solar system, or universe at large.

The exhibit in question, called "[The Artist's Universe](#)" is on display at the annual AAS Division for Planetary Sciences meeting, held this year in Denver, Colorado. So while the scientists peruse poster presentations of the latest scientific results, they can also stop by the exhibit, and take a moment to remember why we all do this science stuff in the first place.

Because it is amazing, cool, and amazing. And very cool.

Image Credits: Marilynn Flynn, Dan Durda, and Monica Aiello - Space Artists. IAAA.

Posted by J.A. Grier at [12:47 PM](#)

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