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Todd Buschur landscapes soothe with solitude

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By **Peter Tonguette**

FOR THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH • Sunday January 10, 2016 5:00 AM

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The paintings of Todd Buschur are serene in the extreme.

The artist, who lives outside Urbana in Champaign County, is drawn to calm landscapes void of people.

Such scenes provide a respite from Buschur's day job as an art teacher at Graham High School in the village of St. Paris.

“People constantly ask for your attention — that’s my job,” Buschur said. “I am, by nature, an introvert; and so I crave those quiet times.”

Indeed, Buschur's work in oil and acrylic — featured in an exhibit at Haley Gallery in New Albany — evoke tranquillity.

A number of works depict great expanses with only occasional indications of the modern world.

In the bright, imposing *The Gathering*, sunlight streams through a thicket of tree trunks and branches; the clean snow in the foreground suggests that the spot has not been disturbed by man or animal.

And in the impressionistic *Out of the Storm Comes an Answer*, a squall is suggested by rough waves and a gray sky, but no seafaring vessel is visible.

A feeling of seclusion pervades the paintings.

In *A Great and Good Place*, for example, Buschur paints a residence nestled atop a hill, enclosed by tall grass in the foreground; the picture's low angle obscures a portion of the house, reflecting the artist's remove from the subject.

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Among the largest works in the show, *The Journey Not Yet Taken* depicts train tracks disappearing into an endless horizon. The azure-colored sky above is mostly absent of clouds — a common feature of several paintings.

“The sky at a certain time of the day . . . when it’s clear and the atmosphere is just right, it gives a sense of silence in the sky, and I love it,” Buschur said.

Where You Are I Am Free, for example, depicts a white clapboard farmhouse; in the background is a clear sky seen in several shades of blue and green. To add clouds to the scene would be to disrupt its purity.

and Andrew Wyeth, who both worked realistically, as well as abstract expressionist Mark Rothko. Rothko’s influence manifests itself in Buschur’s stretches of uninterrupted color.

“There’s a certain sense of opposition there between minimalism of a Rothko and then more of a realism of . . . a Wyeth or even a Hopper,” Buschur said. “I like to combine the two.”

The mixture is apparent in *The Birth of a Line*, which began as an ultra-minimalistic landscape. Buschur later added a stationary train car (and other details) to the foreground.

Buschur’s paintings might highlight solitude, but they make warm companions for the discerning viewer.

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