

## ART

# Setting Out on Journeys And Yearning for Home

By WILLIAM ZIMMER

**T**HE two art spaces at Wesleyan University in Middletown usually go separate ways with their exhibitions. It is that way now, for the most part, but there is nevertheless a tantalizing thematic relationship. Both places have shows featuring art that expresses a yearning for home, or at least solid ground.

Actual solid ground is hard to find at the Zilkha Gallery where Yannis Ziogas, a Greek artist, has successfully created an installation that is at once simple and complex. Mr. Ziogas has thought in terms of visual ballads, themes that intertwine with each other across the space. His main materials are cord and rope that traverse the space from the high ceiling almost to the carpeted floor in an airy web.

These slender underpinnings hold clusters of images that are mostly literal and that viewers often have to crane their necks to see. Small trees growing out of rocks are a frequent motif, and one of the ballads is "The Ballad of the Forgotten Tree."

Another component that unites the sprawling installation illustrates "The Ballad of the Toy Train of the New Agitatsia." It is a slender toy railroad track that shoots across the gallery space. Several small ladders perform much the same function in a vertical way. Many of the solid shapes that serve as platforms seem inspired by those found in Surrealism, especially that of Miro.

Although Mr. Ziogas lives and works in Greece, where he was born in 1962, he was educated in American art schools. This might be inferred by his mastery of the sweeping installation, a mode of art making developed in America. But even though minimal means are employed in the work, the idea of nostalgia, or a longing for place, comes through. The notion of ballads, traditionally reminiscences, reinforces this.

In written material accompanying the show, viewers are reminded that this is a perennial theme in Greek culture, especially Odysseus's wandering. Mr. Ziogas's own odyssey of sorts, his returning to install a work in the country where he went to art school, is invoked as an example of the impulse to to travel, while viewers will have

At the Davidson Art Center, from top left, Charles Sheeler's "MacDougal Alley" (1924); a comic book-like depiction of a fantastic futuristic city by Roy Lichtenstein (1965); and Albrecht Dürer's "Adam and Eve" (1504).



to circumnavigate the Zilkha gallery to absorb both the artist's main ideas and the small details that animate them.

A small complementary show at the Zilkha is "Third Worlds," photographs by Marc-Yves Regis, who is a photographer for The Hartford Courant. Mr. Regis details the lives of poor people in Mississippi and in the Dominican Republic. Amid the almost uniform sadness viewers can spot little moments of obvious pleasure in life.

Across the lawn at the Davison Art Center are two exhibitions with epic themes, "This Must Be the Place," subtitled "Five Centuries of Landscape Art" and "Ruin and Redemption in Urban Landscape." The ambitious shows are possible because they involve the Davison's large print collection.

What saves the "five centuries" show from being overwhelming is that the works are grouped in discrete historical sections.

It begins at the beginning with Albrecht Dürer's 1504 engraving "Adam and Eve," in which Adam binds the pair to a place by grasping the tree of life. Northern European examples end with etchings by Rembrandt who made the landscape both realistic and allegorical. Next stop on the whirlwind tour is classic Japanese woodcuts.

It is mostly American work from here on out, started by a series of moody oil sketches by Elihu Vedder of Italy and Rhode Island from the last few decades of the 19th century. Vedder had a wide mystical streak, which is countered by a section featuring Regionalism, plain-spoken interpretations of America's heartland from the 1930's and 1940's. A slew of more contemporary work ends in Roy Lichtenstein's 1973 comic book-like depiction of a fantastic futuristic city. Paired with this offset lithograph is Charles Sheeler's "MacDougal Alley," a painting

from 1924 that is a Precisionist exercise in plainness and palpability.

The show was organized by Wesleyan art history students as was a companion exhibition, "Ruin and Redemption in Urban Landscape." The ruin part has always fascinated artists but redemption might seem trickier to depict. But the Davison collection has a lot of prints with churches in them that are put to good use here.

"Yannis Ziogas: Ballads" and "Third Worlds: The Photographs of Marc Regis," at the Zilkha Gallery at Wesleyan University through Oct. 20. Information: (860) 685-3600 or [www.wesleyan.edu/CFA/Zilkha](http://www.wesleyan.edu/CFA/Zilkha).

"This Must Be the Place" and "Ruin and Redemption in Urban Landscape" at the Davison Art Center through Oct. 11. Information: (860) 685-2500 or [www.wesleyan.edu/DAC](http://www.wesleyan.edu/DAC).

