

VISUAL ARTS

High-tech tools, simple beauty

By NANCY WORSSAM
Special to *The Seattle Times*

Karin Schminke looks to nature for solace and tranquillity and believes that connection to the natural world is increasingly important to all of us in our ever more complex and frenetic society. Her art, now on display in "Natural Interludes" at the Patricia Cameron Gallery, brings that outdoor calm inside. Her serene landscapes, intricately cut panels and grids reflect the natural forms that quiet our psyches. Yet surprisingly, she achieves this effect by using the most high-tech artist's tools.

Flatbed inkjet printers and lasers are as important in her work as are traditional paints and inks. As one of the pioneers of incorporating digital technologies within contemporary art, she and two colleagues formed Digital Atelier in 1994, where they worked with a manufacturer of these new tools, experimenting, combining media and taking a great leap into unexplored territory.

After years of honing their skills, they wrote "Digital Art Studio," a book that's been described as "a how-to manual for understanding the future."

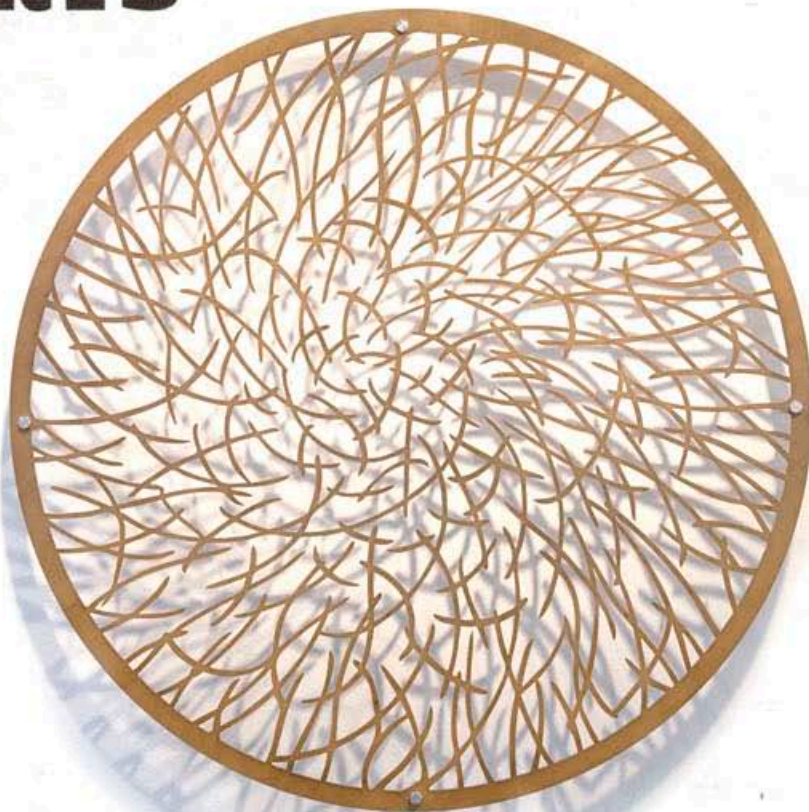
The flatbed inkjet printers allow her greater range in her work. With laser systems, she can cut, mark, etch and engrave almost any surface from paper to stone. On exhibit here are intricate laser-cut wood and metal screens, 3-D objects and grids, as well as etchings.

She creates the etchings through a complicated process that involves programming the laser to etch the paper that she adheres to an aluminum panel. Then she works with various color acrylics, varnishes and pigment inks to achieve the texture and design elements she's looking for.

The viewer sees this in an etched diptych, "Illumination," depicting a vast landscape and distant horizon. Clouds are touched with yellow and mauve. Marsh vegetation seems to

extend from the foreground toward that horizon. But wait — maybe it's reaching toward a distant sea. Or look again, perhaps we see waves breaking against a near shore. The longer you look at this work, the more possibilities you see.

The other etchings on aluminum panels also depict landscapes. The viewer might see in them wind-whipped grasses, roiling seas, or snow-covered fields stretched out before distant horizon lines. Each offers viewers an opportunity to bring to it their own experiences, their own memories. Schminke likes these long views — perhaps they remind her of the flat landscapes of her



PATRICIA CAMERON GALLERY

"Light Pond 2" by Karin Schminke.

native Iowa. She firmly believes that we're all imprinted on a primal level by the landscape of our youth.

Her wood and metal, laser-cut panels are mounted some 3 inches from the wall to provide shadow and a 3-D effect. Particularly compelling is "Lyrical Rhythm," which consists of two side-by-side panels. Both include the same forms and lines, but they are reversed. It's mesmerizing as shape, design and dimension play tricks with your eyes and mind.

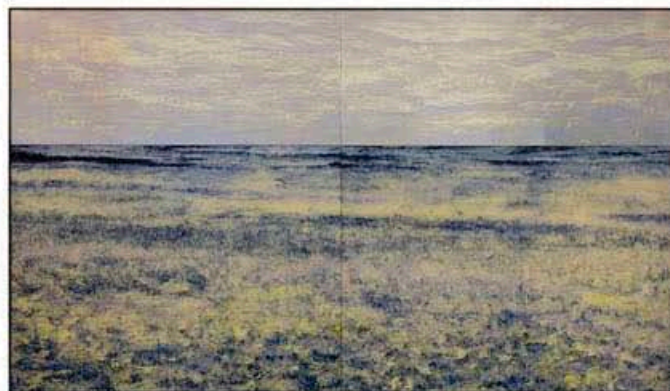
Schminke's work has been exhibited internationally and is owned by museums including the Smithsonian American Art Museum, corporations, and private and public collectors.

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EXHIBITION REVIEW

Karin Schminke: 'Natural Interludes'

11 a.m.-5 p.m. Mondays-Fridays, until 7 p.m. Wednesdays through Sept. 6, Patricia Cameron Gallery, 234 Dexter Ave. N, Seattle; (206-909-9096 or www.patriciacamerongallery.com).



Karin Schminke's
"Illumination."

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