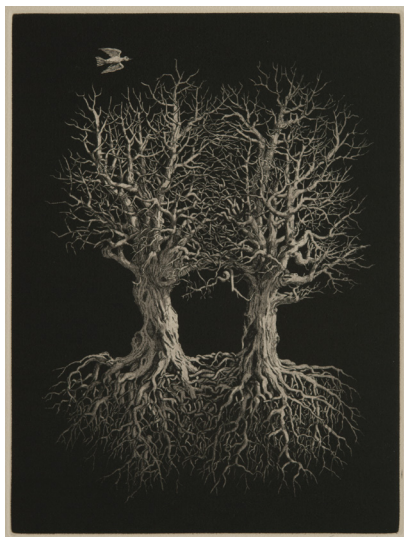


Under the Inspiration Tree: Celebrating the Work of Thomas Wood

WHATCOM MUSEUM, Bellingham WA – To March 2, 2025



Thomas Wood, *Two Trees II*, 2004, etching, aquatint. Edition of 100. Private collection

by Matthew Kangas

Thomas Wood (1951–2022), favorite son of Bellingham, could not have been more traditional in his main medium—classical printmaking—or more conservative in his representational genre subjects: landscapes, still lifes, wildlife, and beach scenes. At first glance, he seems to have never left town, settling down for long periods of time with his etching press, oil paints, nature sketchbooks, and hermetic fantasy imagery.

However, a closer look, which curator Amy Chaloupka gives us in the Whatcom Museum's first full retrospective of Wood's oeuvre, reveals widespread travels abroad that honed his various talents. These travels included residencies at Il Bisonte, the legendary Florentine printmaking atelier, where he studied etching and ultimately taught, not to mention self-guided tours of European museums studying the Old Masters as well as trips to Africa, Venice, and a formative stay in the Gulf Islands in 1985.

Wood's prints—etchings, engravings, intaglios, lithographs, mezzotints and monotypes—were the subject of earlier retrospectives at the Museum of Northwest Art and the Whatcom in 1998, but this survey makes a strong case for the artist's extraordinarily fertile imagination beyond the multiples with trees sprouting magical figures, biblical allegories, hallucinatory flowers, and mock-mythological iconographies that emulate Renaissance artists from Albrecht Dürer to Hans Holbein, Hieronymus Bosch and Francisco Goya. Printmaking was the departure point leading to oils, pastels and collages that accommodated the extraordinary complexity of his vision.

Despite his reclusive worker image, Wood was widely published in magazines and art books and acquired by premier institutions such as the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Yale University, the New York Public Library, the Portland and Tacoma Art Museums, and Sforzesco Castle in Milan. Besides Florence, he exhibited in Venice, New York, Boston, Santa Fe and Nakhodka, Russia.

Printmaking workshops with Mandy Turner, Wood's studio assistant, Nov 16 and Jan 25, 1–4pm

Dinner and curator tour Jan 15, 5:30–8pm

whatcommuseum.org



Thomas Wood *en plein air*