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Movies Books Music Theater Classical Music Television Comics Games & Puzzles Horoscopes

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3 don't-miss gallery shows around Seattle, May edition

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 "Requisite Tutorial," by Ethan Murrow, at Winston Wachter. (Courtesy Winston Wachter)

1 of 3

Ethan Murrow at Winston Wächter, Eirik Johnson and Daniel Carrillo at G. Gibson and Travis Pond at Bryan Ohno.

By [Michael Upchurch](#)

Special to The Seattle Times

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Photorealistic precision put to surreal use; paper origami seen in an oddly metallic light; scrap-metal sculpture that plumbs the riddles of the heart — these are a few of the experiments going on in Seattle art galleries this month.

Ethan Murrow: "The Cowboy"

The Wild West gets a subversive manhandling in 10 new graphite-on-paper drawings by Ethan Murrow. These "hot messes of mixed-up stereotypes," as Murrow calls them, both evoke and deconstruct "a time past that is still very present in the minds of citizens and leaders of this country."

They're also a ton of fun, thanks to Murrow's knack for making the fantastical look plausible. You may not know what his loopy heroes are up to — but you know exactly how they're doing it.

In "Cutting the Waddle of the Pyrite," a ranch hand (Murrow, in self-portrait) makes fine adjustments to a platform of small stacked planks on which a saguaro cactus is balanced. Ropes secure the cactus in place, as if to prepare it, absurdly, for a move.

"Requisite Tutorial" brings things into the motor age. Murrow, lariat in hand, races across a desert landscape in some kind of dune buggy with a startled horse's head mounted on its front. His object of pursuit: a flying car with the words "NO ONE" emblazoned on its side. CinemaScope-wide and crazed with velocity, it's the ultimate action picture.

In other drawings, Murrow crafts cunning illusions within illusions. That strange masked guitar player in "Ballad of the Ain't Can't," for instance, turns out to be a drawing on a circus-tent flap.

The most urgent reason to see "Cowboy" is "Tough Medicine," a site-specific Sharpie wall drawing lampooning cowboy-and-Indian combat, with Murrow in the cowboy role. The proverb "Art is long, life is brief" doesn't apply here. "Tough Medicine" will be painted over after "Cowboy" closes.

10 a.m.-5 p.m. Mondays-Saturdays through June 20,
Winston Wächter Fine Art, 203 Dexter Ave. N., Seattle
(206-652-5855 or winstonwachter.com).