

ART REVIEW

REFINING & ENERGIZING

Local shows showcase works by locals
William Glen Crooks, Andy Ralph

By **Robert L. Pincus**
ART CRITIC

The freight train is winding its way toward the front of the picture in "Slow Train." A road descends a hill and disappears off the left edge of the canvas in "The Other Side." In this pair of works from his exhibition at Scott White Contemporary Art, William Glen Crooks makes it seem as if the scenes he paints are each part of a potentially larger picture.

All successful landscapes are pleasingly ordered fragments of the world, but Crooks heightens our awareness that he is creating this kind of order. And drawing attention to the structuring of a picture adds a contemporary overlay to his essentially realist paintings.

He doesn't question the basic premise, intact until impressionism, that a landscape should appear as if it mirrors the world. But like all genuinely interesting conservative artists — Edward Hopper would be a prime example — Crooks doesn't simply repeat the past. He adds his imprint to it.

This is the seventh solo exhibition in 10 years at Scott White Contemporary Art for the artist, who lives and works in Imperial Beach. He has honed his craft through the years, but he's worked at a consistently high level.

Crooks continues to work both close to home and far afield. The world hints at elegant designs among its abundant sights, but it takes the right sort of artist to ferret them out.

"The Other Side" is a powerful example. It toys with our sense of perception, setting up a tautly calibrated tension between the flatness of the picture surface and the sharp tilt of the pale road as it cuts across the steep landscape. Your eye inevitably travels up and down the road and, of course, you do wonder what's on the other side.

With this painting, like many of his images, sustained viewing has multiple rewards. He sets up a "dialogue" between the line of the road and the more irregular line of a brook. He orchestrates light and shadow with a delicacy that is

DETAILS

"William Glen Crooks," paintings

When: Through Dec. 14

Where: Scott White Contemporary, 2400 Kettner Blvd., Little Italy

Tickets: Free

Phone: (619) 501-5689

Online: www.scottwhiteart.com

"Push-Pull," sculptures and drawings by Andy Ralph

When: Through tomorrow

Where: Spacecraft Gallery, 2865 North Park Way, North Park

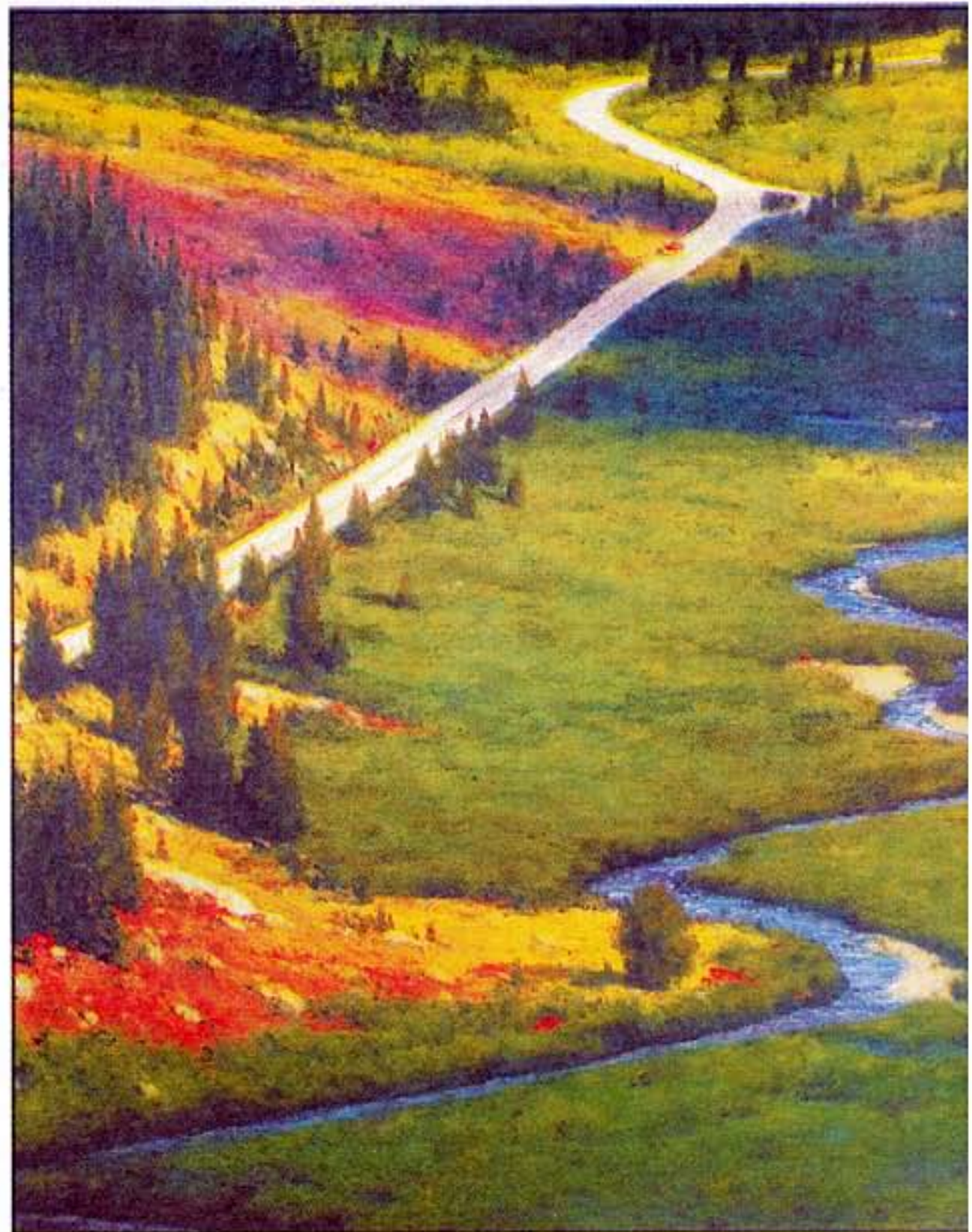
Tickets: Free

Phone: (619) 291-2752

Online: www.spacecraftstudio.com

something to behold.

He sometimes eases into conventional imagery, as with "A Front Yard" or "Night of the Rockets." Even in these lesser pictures, however, the attention to light and color is keen. Rendering a freight train curving across a golden field or a road running down a hill could end up looking utterly conventional in the work of some painters, but in his canvases these subjects are infused with a sense of familiar sights freshly seen.



William Glen Crooks' "The Other Side" is the kind of subtle landscape painting that rewards sustained viewing. *Scott White Contemporary Art*

