

## 'Light, Seeking Light' yields significant rewards for the patient viewer

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Look carefully at the wall and floor for Mary Temple's paintings in "Light, Seeking Light." Photo: // SL

Mary Temple's shadows do not owe their visibility to light. Like [Peter Pan](#)'s cast reflection that crept away without him, her trees painted in latex on walls and stain on the floor suggest a fragility they have transcended. They will not dissolve when the sun goes down or lose their form in a larger dark.

Temple is the contrary part of "Light, Seeking Light" at Western Bridge. Because her scraggly yet delicate trees are not dark enough to be decisive, the main gallery looks empty with her work in it. In off-white paint on white walls, the illusion of trees turns gold on the blond wood of the floor. It might have poured in from a window except there aren't any, and the ground outside is paved for parking.

"Light, Seeking Light" takes its title from Shakespeare's "Love's Labours Lost": "Light, seeking light, doth light of light beguile ..."

Visitors easily find themselves in the center of the room before realizing there is art in it. The painting, titled 'Raise,' makes most sense in that sudden start of recognition. In claiming life for a phantom, "Raise" liberates Plato's metaphor from his disapproval. If the world of the senses is no more significant than shadows cast by firelight in a cave, then it's high time to celebrate it.

How tender Temple is with this world, in which living things are always moving toward an exit. In her painting's embrace, there is time to stop and wonder at the beauty of fleeting shadows that are fixed in place.

There is nothing visual about Susan Philipsz's "Here Comes Everybody," which plays continuously in two small galleries, one lighted, with three speakers hanging in the corners of the room, and the other dark, featuring the remaining speaker.

The sound from the first gallery is an indie-girl blur of Philipsz harmonizing in triplicate with herself in fasola or shape-note singing.

Fasola singers are their own audiences. They face the center of the room to perform, and there's no one in that center.

Each voice is a thread that cannot appreciate the larger tapestry of the collective sound. It's singing on faith for the sake of singing, coded to vowels to prevent easy entry by the uninitiated and even by the singers themselves, who come together to remain alone.

In the second room, Philipsz sings the same song straight, a 1982 single by Scottish post-punk band Strawberry Switchblade titled "Trees and Flowers."

What puzzled and even annoyed me the first time through with the vowel chorus clobbered me in the dark, so perfect is Philipsz's voice to the lyric, which speaks of an overwhelmed young woman all alone.

Solange Fabaio's "Amazonia" stitches together sunrises and sunsets from a fixed perspective in the Amazon rain forest, in the center of the woods and on the river.

The reclusive are ill advised to try for peace in a rain forest. Every inch of the air is alive with sound; every tree home to creatures large and small. When the day shift leaves off its shrills, chirps, peeps, rattles and caws, the night shift takes over with cricket buzz and frog bellows.

The high-definition video spans a large wall, and the clarity of Fabaio's equipment brings day to life as it unfolds across treetops before dropping to the floor and withdrawing into night. In a boat on a river, she records a storm that comes up behind her. Visitors hear it before they see it.

Moths are the original beautiful losers. In spite of the beauty of some, a reputation for avidity precedes all. They are chewed by their appetites, which is why butterflies get all the good press.

Butterflies sip nectar, but a moth swallows till it falls over, full of leaves or the wool from a matching skirt-and-sweater set. Moths that do not eat to excess are still doomed to act out the archetypal addict. They bang against screen doors or fry themselves on electric bulbs in dark search of a bright death.

Claire Cowie made hers a burrowing glory. Each is an individual sculpture painted in mottled splendor or pale translucence and placed to climb the wall. Together and singly, in variegated streams of color and kind, their splendor cannot be denied.

Four and a half years ago, Bill and [Ruth True](#) founded Western Bridge as a free-admission, nonprofit art space, with [Eric Fredericksen](#) as director in a singular building designed by [Roy McMakin](#). The Trues use it to explore and enlarge on themes suggested by the art in their collection. When they opened, they said they planned to keep it going for 10 years.

Plans can change. Western Bridge is not a museum. It's not permanent, and it's not a homage to its owners, designed to continue after their deaths.

On the same deliberately modest note, "Light, Seeking Light" is not a spectacle. Visitors who slow down and tap into reserves of patience will be rewarded. In asking for patience, the show feels like a transition away from the high dazzle of earlier days.

Temple's "Raise" will remain in the front gallery for a year or maybe more, while other work will be taken down and replaced either at once or singly. New shows might not be entirely new but develop from the premises of the shows that preceded them.

Western Bridge is a gift. Those who wonder what the fuss is about shouldn't wait to find out. Before they know it, it could be gone.