

An Exhibition of U.F.O. Art Lands in Idaho

Aliens Come Into Focus at an Idaho Art Exhibition



Esther Pearl Watson's "Water from Comet-Sized Celestial Bodies Are Stored in Their Ships" (2022). Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York

By Gisela Williams

In 2019, Courtney Gilbert, the curator at the Sun Valley Museum of Art in Ketchum, Idaho, started to notice a flurry of news articles about U.A.P.s (unidentified anomalous phenomena), as NASA terms U.F.O.s. Then, during the pandemic, Gilbert says, there was a big uptick in sightings, particularly in her home state. "At one point Idaho was the state where the most encounters were reported," she notes. Less interested in aliens than in what motivated her fellow humans to seek other signs of life, Gilbert commissioned the Chicago-based artist Deb Sokolow, known for her semi-fictitious drawings and artist books, and the Seattle-based painter Cable Griffith to create works for an exhibition, "Sightings," which opens Sept. 14. Those pieces will be shown alongside work by other artists such as Esther Pearl Watson, who — inspired by her father, who once attempted to build a flying saucer — often paints U.F.O.s hovering over scenes of American life, and Karla Knight, who makes paintings and drawings of what she describes as extraterrestrial symbols or diagrams. Artist talks and astrophotography workshops will also be offered Sept. 14-16. "Sightings" will be on view through Dec. 2, svmoa.org.