

Museums

In the galleries: Photos that take twists and turns at Civilian Art Projects

By Mark Jenkins January 23

Photographic imagery is the line that runs through Civilian Art Projects' "Resolutions 2015," but it threads in many directions. Ryan Hill's deadpan rendering of five cats was done in gouache, but it's modeled on an Internet photo collage. At the other extreme is Brandon Morse's "Tete a Tete," an abstract black-and-white video. Its undulating computer-generated forms may not be based on anything real, but they evoke underwater grasses and microscopic cilia (or maybe close-ups of the fur on those cats).

More conventional, if not exactly traditional, are Frank DiPerna's and Jason Falchook's photographs. DiPerna's include one in which a plastic tent divides a public space — and the photo — disorientingly. Falchook's mostly reveal light at a remove, whether glimmering through a portal or peeking through an awning perforated with tiny tears. A Corcoran-educated Brooklynite, Falchook has a painter's eye for contrast and pattern.

The other three participants are collagists of various kinds. Bridget Sue Lambert combines dollhouse vignettes with date-night text messages such as "He's really funny!!!" Ken D. Ashton's multiframe views of the Van Ness area juxtapose shapes and formats to demonstrate the unpredictability of one of Washington's more homogeneous neighborhoods. Dan Tague, a New Orleans artist known for folding dollar bills to invent new national mottoes, also seems to be jumbling urban scenes. But the buildings in his layered mixed-media works are actually taken from images on world currencies. For Tague, cities are defined foremost by economic power.

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Resolutions 2015 On view through Jan. 31 at Civilian Art Projects, 4718 14th St. NW. 202-607-3804.
www.civilianartprojects.com.

Helder Batista & Mimi Herbert

French artist Helder Batista likes to work with found objects — and loaded images. In the window at Artist's Proof Gallery is a metal barrel, painted black and held in midair by a column of simulated red liquid, redolent of oil and blood. Inside the gallery, Batista has wrapped several American flags and an Israeli one around gun-shaped forms. The effect is immediate yet ambiguous. A former emergency medical technician, the artist has likely seen the effects of firearm violence. But it is unclear whether the pieces are meant as blasts at U.S. and Israeli policies. Previously, Batista has made gun sheathes from Soviet and checkered racing flags.

Artist's Proof tends to feature art with a glossy finish, which Batista's certainly has. He coats the flags in resin so they shine, although the texture of the fabric shows through. He also collages toys, including Legos and doll-size ballet shoes, in blocks of clear acrylic. The plastic building blocks are fixed in space, but randomly, as if frozen in mid-explosion. Like the gun-flags, the Lego assemblage is prim and sleek yet with a hint of violence.

Showing with Batista is local artist Mimi Herbert, who also works with plastic and flags. Her pieces are made from brightly colored acrylic sheets that appear folded into place but are in fact permanently formed. Her "Flag Twist" is less literal than Batista's take on the U.S. standard: All in white, it substitutes small holes for stripes and large ones for stars. Curled on the wall, Herbert's two banners resemble bath mats more than something people might fight for, or over.

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Helder Batista & Mimi Herbert On view through Feb. 12 at Artist's Proof, 1533 Wisconsin Ave. NW. 202-803-2782. www.aproof.net.

Janet Matthews

Just one object appears in each of the black-and-white photographs in Janet Matthews's show at Multiple Exposures Gallery, but that doesn't mean the images are simple. As its title indicates, "The Space Between" focuses on a sort of everyday infinity. Using drastically narrow depth of field, the Maryland photographer reduces things to their edges or outlines. Yet the realm between the crisp and the vague is, fascinatingly, almost legible.

The principal subjects are books, sometimes reduced to the wobbly edge of a single page, and bottles, all shiny lips and sexy curves. Matthews also captures a goblet, its edge a dark swirl that divides two luminous gray sectors, and a fork whose precisely rendered tines are doubled by reflections so indistinct that they look like drops of light. These

ever could. While her

pictures are spare and intimate, their space between gives them a sweep that suggests landscapes.

The Space Between: Photographs by Janet Matthews On view through Feb. 8 at Multiple Exposures Gallery, Torpedo Factory, 105 N. Union St., Alexandria, Va. 703-683-2205. www.multipleexposuresgallery.com.

Duly Noted Painters

Sometimes it's hard to know where to stop, which can be an even bigger problem when the decision is collective. Yet none of the eight large neo-expressionist pictures in "Composite Allusions" appears overworked, even though the District of Columbia Arts Center show is the work of two artists who collaborate. In fact, the Duly Noted Painters — Matthew Malone and Kurtis Ceppetelli — cultivate a deliberately crude quality. Their drawing-paintings of commonplace D.C. life combine an offhand approach with the intricate compositions of classical painting, a strategy that recalls Larry Rivers's style.

Where Rivers sometimes reinterpreted well-known canvases, the Duly Noted team prefers local street scenes. "Free Hands" shows soccer players in subdued hues — mostly white and gray, with daubs of fleshy pink — and "The Fallen" depicts what seems to be a homeless man in a pose of heroic defeat. The subjects suit the scrappy execution; the artists sketch with charcoal, then add areas of bright, simple color with recycled latex house paint. The result is simultaneously wispy and bold, flat and deep, rough and consummate. There may be a superfluous line here or there, but Malone and Ceppetelli have a fine sense of when a picture is done.

Composite Allusions: Duly Noted Painters On view through Feb. 8 at District of Columbia Arts Center, 2438 18th St. NW. 202-462-7833. www.dcartscenter.org.

Divine

The group show at Epicure Cafe is titled "Divine," but the group that organized it is the Bunnyman Bridge Collective, named for an urban legend about a bunny-suited killer. The 12 artists include Mojgan Yaghmaei, who renders lines from Rumi and Zoroaster in Persian-style calligraphy. Yet most of the work seems more horror-struck than holy.

Skulls are a motif, from Javier Padilla's images of red-and-black brainstorms inside stark-featured heads to Joseph Nocolia's ink-spattered goth drawings. Toni Hitchcock's pictures include one of the skull of John Merrick (a.k.a. the Elephant Man), as well as the show's title work, which depicts a robed skeleton. Michael Fischerkeller depicts graffiti, ominous figures and international landmarks such as, presciently, the Eiffel Tower. Although the bunnyman is a myth, the collective named for him ponders many genuine menaces.

Divine On view through Feb. 7 at Epicure Cafe, 11104 Lee Highway, Fairfax, Va. 703-352-9193.

www.epicurecafe.org.

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