



Art

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Artist David Barnes has Newport show

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It could be a summer block party. Or a tense and hostile street protest in Iran. "Tehran" is part of an exhibition by David Barnes at Didi Suydam Contemporary in Newport.

DIDI SUYDAM CONTEMPORARY

When anti-government protests erupted in Iran last year, many Americans turned to online sites like YouTube and Twitter, trusting them to deliver information that was more timely and less biased than traditional mainstream media.

One of those who found himself glued to the computer screen was David Barnes, a young Newport artist whose lush, paint-dappled landscapes and nature studies have been getting a lot of attention lately.

In particular, Barnes was fascinated by the way the pictures of protesters, many of them shot by average

people wielding cell phones and digital cameras, were more effective at communicating the immediacy (if not always the meaning) of events than the work of professional reporters. At the same time, he wondered if such images — grainy, jittery and often pixilated beyond recognition — might eventually distort the way we perceive reality.

In his new show at Didi Suydam Contemporary (24 Bannister's Wharf, Newport), Barnes explores this phenomenon — and his mixed reactions to it — in a series of paintings that draw directly on images, including the 2002 Bali nightclub bombing and last year's Iranian street protests, posted on YouTube and other sites.

In the painting shown here, Barnes conjures up an ambiguous scene that looks more like a summer block party or a busy Friday night at the mall than a potentially dangerous street demonstration. It's only when you notice the work's title — "Tehran" — that the painting's actual setting becomes clear.

For more info, call (401) 848-9414 or visit www.didisuydamcontemporary.com

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