

## AROUND TOWN

**Summertime: Six Photographers** — Roxvonne's ARTiques, located at 3426 9th Street NE on Historic Brookland's Gallery Row, will feature original photographs by six Washington-area photographers. The show features photographs and manipulated images of summer, including children at play, bridges and alleys, fireworks, flowers and other scenes. On view through Aug. 31.



## ARTSCAPES

### Conversions: The art of becoming is very becoming

By Robin Tierney  
Special to The Examiner

Self-made media is a driving force in *Conversions*, a super-show that just opened at the Ellipse Arts Center in Arlington.

Take "Reticula," for example. Michele Kong used hot glue to create a 10x16-foot translucent, architectural glasslike scrim of repeated patterns of intersecting and overlapping arcs. The lacy work reflects the Baltimore-based artist's interest in the architects of nature, such as spiders, as much as the architects of human structures, such as Antoni Gaudi.

Through striking work that has won accolades coast to coast, Kong aims "to gently persuade viewers to slow down, to ... appreciate [life's] transience, to revel in moments of discovery." Her creations satisfy her desire to share places of "exquisite stillness."

In contrast, Lisa Kellner scavenges for discarded materials, then "transforms them into something completely contrary to that original use." Take "Oil Spill," a sculptural form she distilled from a handmade wall surface using 60,000 yellow-tipped quilting pins. You could quickly forget that the New York transplant to rural Virginia daylights in home design upon examination of her entry.

While pins are typically used to fix things in place, in Kellner's hands they depict motion — on their own and as changing light creates migrating shadows. The viewer can plunge into this visible, free-floating tactile landscape.

Co-presented by Ellipse Arts Center and Washington Project for the Arts/Corcoran, the exhibition's spatial interpretation-explorations were juried by art teacher Dennis O'Neil, collectors Heather and Tony Podesta, and groundbreaking, D.C.-based contemporary artist Sam Gilliam.

The Ellipse's generously sized space is a perfect match for the show, which features remarkable work from some dozen regional artists. The selections span photography to video and mixed media, with each artist tailoring his or her work to the specific site.

These transformative pieces merit a visit — and may even inspire conversions among those with aversions to contemporary art.

## CONVERSIONS

On view through September 29

» **Venue:** Ellipse Arts Center, 4350 North Fairfax Drive, Arlington  
» **Info:** 703-228-7710; [arlingtonarts.org/ellipseartscenter.htm](http://arlingtonarts.org/ellipseartscenter.htm)

» **Jurors' Talk:** 7 p.m. Wednesday  
» **Artists' Talk:** 7 to 9 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 21

## Nation's 76th Fringe Festival is D.C.'s first

A new event is capitalizing on two Washington strengths: the summer season and the city's eclectic art scene. The Capital Fringe Festival kicked off Thursday and will run through July 30.

The 10-day performing arts festival features multiple performances each day at more than 20 traditional and not-so-traditional venues across the Penn Quarter neighborhood — from the Warehouse Theatre and Chinatown's Goethe Institute to the Flashpoint Art Gallery, Woolly Mammoth Theatre and churches and synagogues.

But perhaps what's most interesting is how fringe art came to be. In late 1940s Scotland, performers excluded from the prestigious Edinburgh International Festival were said to be on the fringe. The movement quickly grew in popularity, spreading far beyond Edinburgh.

Today, fringe performance — including theatre, dance, spoken word and puppetry — have established a welcome presence in the nation's capital. The Capital Fringe Festival is celebrating that, bringing together artists from across the nation and the world.

"The range and diversity of the performers is outstanding. With artists from all over and all different disciplines, this is looking to be an event unlike any other in the District," said Julianne Brienza, festival director and co-founder.

Performances range from a very contemporary adaptation of Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" — where Oberon owns a posh nightclub tended by Puck — to a theatrical exploration of a fresh-out-of-college actor's search for meaningful work.

And what's more, the performances are affordable — more than 80 performances are \$15 or less, including many which are free. Tickets can be purchased by calling 866-811-4111, visiting [capfringe.org](http://capfringe.org) or in-person at the Warehouse Downtown Arts Complex, 1012-21 Seventh St. NW. — *Dustin Mace/washington.org*

## MUSEUMS » NEW EXHIBIT

### A true aboriginal

'Dreaming' celebrates an eclectic mix from Australia

By Robin Tierney  
Special to The Examiner

Money has been a midwife of invention more often than we'd like to admit. Yet sometimes, the results outshine creations possessing more esoteric roots.

When Aboriginal women in Australia were liberated over the last three decades to contribute to family finances, so ended the age-old tradition of men serving as sole repositories of cultural heritage. In their embrace of painting, informal co-ops of women have attracted the attention of art connoisseurs on distant shores. The women also used their visual voices to tell their side of the ancestral stories.

Nearly 80 impressive works at the National Museum of Women in the Arts take you on a mystical tour of deserts and tropics Down Under. "Dreaming Their Way" shares abstract vistas of lands wrested from natives by European settlers, and visions inspired by folklore. Distinctions in artistic styles among Aboriginal societies emerge while trekking from one geographically focused gallery to the next.

Here, "Dreamings" connote narratives of societal heritage, records about geography, relationships and the bond between native peoples and their land. Some hark back to creation. A few echo bits of globalized pop culture. Many interpret native mythology, previously represented with ephemeral media to last barely past the ceremony for which they were created. Tales retold include women on food-gathering missions (as in Tatali Nangala's trippy rug-like "Two Women's Travels to the Rock Hole Site of Tjunpany") and include desert painter Mitjili Napurrula's "Milky Way Seven Sisters Dreaming," in which the title characters turn themselves into stars to escape an unwanted suitor.

Clearly, commerce is not the muse for these spectacular ancestral-folk-contemporary fusions. Among Central Australian native communities, for instance, works map the travels

of Dreaming ancestors, connote specific landmarks and translate ceremonial designs for uninitiated eyes. Keep in mind that at 50,000 years old, Australian Aboriginals maintain the longest continuous culture in the world.

"Napangati's Kungka Kutjarra at Kampurarrpa," a dazzling tapestry-like acrylic, celebrates the travels of two women as they created the land and life forms of Central Australia's Papunya region. Papunya is ground zero of a dot-and-circle style combining graphic symbols and a restricted palette of white, yellow, red and black to stay true to the rocks and earth of the landscape.

## DREAMING THEIR WAY

On view through Sept. 24

» **Venue:** National Museum of Women in the Arts, 1250 New York Ave. NW, Washington  
» **Info:** 202-783-5000; [nmwa.org](http://nmwa.org)

In the Yuendumu region, early compositions echoed sacred designs used in body painting. Dorothy Napangardi Robinson's "Bush Plum Dreaming" shimmers with the illusion of movement. In this view of a flowing plum tree, thousands of feathery brushstrokes divide fields of brilliantly hued wildflowers, evoke the ripening of plums and tantalize with their intricate patterns.

Such delightful pointillistic romps invigorate many of the selections. Dots undulate among lines; layers of obsession draw you into galaxies and quicksands of color. Deceptively simple at first glance, the works are complex in design, meticulous in detail, and infused with an infectious joy.

In the Northern Territory, ochre painting on bark is a tradition. Artists include Dorothy Djukulul, whose sacred totem, "Magpie Geese and Crocodile 1990" (pictured at right) spins a wild yarn about a man on fire. In an intriguing depiction of flying foxes ("Warrnyu"), she employs her clan's design of cross-hatching and solid colors to create a striking pattern of upside-down foxes — similar to images painted on young men's bodies during rites of passage.

Indulge in these exuberant, larger-than-life works, and you'll likely be "Dreaming" their way, too.

