

In the galleries: Four curators share one spotlight

By Mark Jenkins

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Because its home is a former school, the Arlington Arts Center is subdivided in a way that isn't especially conducive to single-themed exhibitions. Thus the venue's current "Curator's Spotlight," which splits the real estate among four programmers.

Visually, the most cohesive section is "Minding the Hand," selected by Betsy Johnson. Although the theme is "labor-intensive practices," the outcome is a selection of handsome minimalist pieces, many made of found objects. The four artists neatly juxtapose castoff manufactured material — there's lots of VHS tape — with natural items. The latter include worm-spun silk and cicada wings, arrayed in Elsabé Dixon's elegant wall installations.

Technology is central to "Click Here," assembled by Kayleigh Bryant-Greenwell. It includes stop-motion video and oil paintings that emulate pixels. Most electric is Michelle Lisa Herman's set of dangling cellphone-like devices. They pulse white lights at one another, signifying both connection and disconnection.

The imagery turns fleshier in "Let Me Look at You," chosen by Katy Scarlett. Amid the photos and performance video, the standout is Aaron McIntosh and Nick Clifford Simko's pile of upholstered tubes, which look like logs, except that they're made from fabric patterned to resemble the men's skin.

Water is the link for the Ann Tarantino-curated "Seep," the most diverse of the four showcases. Included are actual poppies sprouting in patterned soil, watery abstract ink paintings and pop-art-style oils of swamps. The most pointed works are by Patrick McDonough and include a lifeguard station to be built in anticipation of the waterfront to result from rising sea levels.

The artist also takes amusing swipes at the craft-beer cult (with a proposal for a stormwater-irrigated hops garden) and [Frank Gehry's](#)

into two towers, erected in Southwest Washington “to honor President Eisenhower’s dream of disarmament.” Perhaps the memorial will someday be beachfront property.

Curator’s Spotlight *On view through March 26 at Arlington Arts Center, 3550 Wilson Blvd., Arlington. 703-248-6800.*
arlingtonartscenter.org.

Tim Doud

Before photography upended the trade, portrait painters generally depicted their subjects in whatever way their clients instructed. Tim Doud does that, too, but not to celebrate social status. His posers are allowed to costume themselves however they like, trying on fanciful personae in the process. Thus the portraits in “Prologue, 1996-2016,” Doud’s show at Gallery Neptune & Brown, feature gear such as a leopard-skin dress, an American flag shirt and a kaffiyeh, the headscarf often worn by Middle Eastern men. One benefit of the varied wardrobe is that it helps distinguish the many pictures of New York artist Rodney Cuellar, who has posed for Doud regularly for 20 years. (The flag shirt and kaffiyeh are among his get-ups.)

Most of the works are oils on paper, although there are a few on linen, as well as several charcoals. Doud, who teaches at American University, often positions his subjects in direct engagement with the viewer, in the manner of ID photos and photorealists such as Chuck Close. But Doud doesn’t work from photographs, and sometimes depicts gazes and poses at an angle to the picture plane. The approach is painterly yet precise, and strongly conveys specific likenesses. It’s not just the clothing that gives Doud’s subjects their individuality.

Tim Doud: Prologue, 1996-2016 *On view through April 1 at Gallery Neptune & Brown, 1530 14th St. NW; 202-986-1200.*
neptunefineart.com.

Spitball

Next month it will be something else, but at the moment, the first floor of H-Space is D.C.’s artiest common room. The impromptu gallery is part of a new condo building at Ninth and U streets NW, whose alley-facing annex contains work-live spaces for artists Kristin Hatleberg, Katherine Tzu-Lan Mann and Erik Moe. They’re collaborating on “Spitball” (as in “to throw out an idea for discussion”). The in-process installation includes painting, sculpture, video projections and maps of the surrounding area. The project will be completed only when it’s ready to be disassembled.

The maps are meant to direct walks, either self-guided or led by Moe (on March 25 and 30). The routes indicate current, long-vanished or simply imaginary landmarks, and point to the neighborhood's "collective utopian future." This is reflected in the use of such speculative names as "Douglass Commonwealth" (a proposed alternative meaning for "D.C.") and "New South Canada" (for the entire United States).

H-Space was conceived by Hamiltonian Artists founder Paul So. Long-term plans for the building's ground floor are still being spitballed.

Spitball On view through March 31 at H-Space, 1932 Ninth St. NW (rear); 202-332-1116; hamiltonianartists.org/journal/2017/2/22/spitball-welcome-to-h-space.

Becky S. Kim & Heidi Nam

Korean-born artists Becky S. Kim and Heidi Nam both respond to landscapes, but in very different ways. Kim's "Dreamscapes" depict the artist's reveries, not specific places. Nam's "Netted" is inspired by urban patterns yet ventures into abstraction.

Nam's Art League Gallery show began with a return trip to Korea, where she saw that severe contemporary architecture had largely displaced the city she remembered. Her mixed-media and collage pieces are based in part on these new buildings; some pictures are high-rise panoramas that could represent Manhattan, Seoul or many other boomtowns. The most striking, however, are less literal. The shimmering "Soaked in Blue" evokes, all at once, Bauhaus-style structures, right-angled street grids and the geometries that underlie them.

There's no urban bustle to Kim's Foundry Gallery show, whose thickly painted oils portray open country that might be Italy, Korea or someplace unreal. The artist also does graceful portraits, and sometimes places a lone female figure amid the scenery. There's a hint of Modigliani to Kim's elongated necks and tree trunks, although not to her palette, which emphasizes grays and greens.

This color scheme suggests a bond between the forest and the person in it. In "Walking With Wonder," the head and shoulders of an apparently nude woman are framed by a sylvan path, and her thick black hair resembles a tree's leafy crown. The most impressionistic picture, "Shower in the Field," simulates rain's power to blur vision and boundaries. The painting's wispieness very nearly allows the viewer to enter Kim's dreamscape.

Becky S. Kim: Dreamscapes and Heidi Nam: Netted: Morphological State of Our Urban Space On view through April 2 at, respectively, at Foundry Gallery, 2118 Eighth St. NW. 202-232-0203. foundrygallery.org, and the Art League Gallery, Torpedo Factory, 105 N. Union St., Alexandria. 703-683-1780. theartleague.org.

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