These studies sing the body electric.

BY MARK JENKINS

Once a crucial part of a visual artist’s repertoire, the figure study is far less important in the photographic era. All 40 artists in Hillyer Art Space’s “Flesh & Bone II” may have mastered life drawing, but few of them demonstrate the need to prove it. Representing themselves, their body is essential to pieces such as Ghislaine Frenen’s side drawing of a male nude, glistening with sweat but with veins, it’s taut and, though, to many more of the works.

Kirsty Little’s wood-and-wire sculpture suggests just a pair of eelshads. Kevin quilis Roelle’s wispy photo-derived faces are secondary to the 100 small circles of recycled paper that contains them. Ambivalence permeates corporeality in photos such as Gabriela Angulo’s depiction of a person at a window. Bad Armaghian Mehrmann’s study of a shrouded woman in a darkened space, Ashley Smith’s female seminude is mostly a photograph, but with fabric in place of public hair. In Yoko Ogi’s collage-drawing of bisecting armatures, the human presence is a grinning Dick Cheney.

It’s hardly surprising that the artists, many from this region but some from New York and beyond, do not share an aesthetic. Jüri Lorraine Rain’s selection of umbrellas is cohesive. Yet many of the most memorable entries are realist, and they’re striking not just when they’re intimate on a monumental scale, such as Frenen’s nude or Ming Ying Hong’s charcoal drawing of Fingers kneading a bare belly. Far smaller yet equally as intriguing is Steven Labadoss’s neoclassical oil of a freckled, red-haired woman. The subject looks straight at the viewer, calmly but with a soulfulness that indicates she’s more than flesh and bone.

**Flesh & Bone II**

**On view through July 31 at Hillyer Art Space, 9 Hillyer St., NW. 202-338-0325.**

**hillyerartspace.org.**

POP of Kolor

One of American fine art’s most accessible manifestations, pop art is at home in museums around the globe. It’s also refracted and repressed in shows such as “POP of Kolor,” a two-woman exhibition at the Korean Cultural Center. Kirangyoon Song appropriates Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein works for her mixed-media piece, Kirangyun Park seems more inspired by commercial art, Warhol’s field for the proverbial 15 minutes before he became famous. Song combines painted, artworks, unable or unwilling to merge. Park presents cartoon-style images of everyday and mostly modern things: sunglasses, bandannas, lightbulbs, airplanes, hearts and brass (and brass with hearts on them). Such consumer icons appear in drawings, relief sculptures and large, toylike holograms. All are brightly colored, saved for the black-and-white wallpaper that repeats the same items. The overall effect resembles a stroll through a shopping mall that caters to wishes that might be simple and open, or complex and hidden.

**POP of Kolor**

**On view through Aug. 1 at the Korean Cultural Center, 2370 Massachusetts Ave., NW. 202-339-5869. koreaeventum.org.**

Julia Bloom and Susan Hostetler

A grand swoop of life-size, varicolored birds covers most of the largest uninterrupted wall of the high-ceilinged Athenaeum, where “The Beauty of Infections” is on display. The birds, made primarily of clay, are the work of District-based artist Susan Hostetler. They flock alongside painted-stick sculptures by Julia Bloom, also of the District, whose constructions suggest nests and baskets but are too airy to be either. The space defined by birds and branches is central to the effect. Bloom’s and Hostetler’s pieces are generally mounted close to the white walls, so they throw shadows in shifting patterns. Both artists explore the same motifs in one-dimensional works on paper or Mylar. The grids and the birds remain compelling when rendered loosely in, respectively, charcoal or gouache and graphite. Bloom’s and Hostetler’s celebrations of nature are also explorations of abstract form.

**Julia Bloom and Susan Hostetler**

**The Beauty of Infections**

**On view through July 31 at the Athenaeum, 204 Pinto St., Alexandria. 703-548-0335.**

**Chrisie Neptune**

White walls, standard in modern-art galleries, are designed not to compete with what’s on display. They serve another function in Christie Neptune’s “She Fell From Normalcy,” a Hamiltonian Gallery show of text, installations and photographic images, both still and moving. In some of the videos, two black women in white underdresses explore an all-white space, probing the box’s sides. The cell that holds them may represent “the hegemonic system of whiteness” the New York artist confronts, according to the gallery’s notes.

“I wanted out of my skin... so I began to pull at my label,” explains the text with a video of a woman who’s photographing herself. Another piece lists freed, absurd and yet not entirely banished slaves against African Americans. Like many contemporary artists, Neptune intends to use her work to establish and proclaim her individual identity. But before she can do that, she recognizes, she must dispel racial stereotypes that — as recent events have made clear — are still potent and oppressive.

**Christie Neptune: She Fell From Normalcy**

**On view through Saturday at Hamiltonian Gallery, 1353 U St. NW, Suite 101. 202-332-1105. hamiltoniangallery.com.**

Maureen Minehan

It’s clearly not prime beach time in the photographs in “At Water’s Edge.” Maureen Minehan’s show at Multiple Exposures Gallery. Perhaps these head-shoots of bleached-out images were made at daybreak or twilight, before or after the crash. Only a few people are visible, and just in some of the pictures. But corridors are expected, as can be seen from the fake objects on “Trash Line” and “Anticipation.” The latter features a postcard that stands for the movies that will later see them. The red caymens also offer a vivid contrast to the photos’ tans, white and barely-there blue. In mysterious pictures such as “Bolsho,” in which a pier fades into the mist, the seaside seems a place where civilization might simply evaporate. Once the umbrellas and trash cans, with their defiant primary color, declare that humanity won’t be absorbed back into the ocean.

**Maureen Minehan: At Water’s Edge**

**On view through July 31 at Multiple Exposures Gallery, Topo, Factory, 105 N. Orca St., Alexandria. 703-548-5205.**

**multipleexposuresgallery.com.**

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