

GALLERIES

Artist's experimental style grounded in classic sensibilities

BY MARK JENKINS

There are several doors into the gallery of the Mexican Cultural Institute, which is hosting Anamario Hernandez's "The Force of Fragility," but most visitors will probably first encounter "Meditation." The large painting is an apt beginning, for it exemplifies the Mexico-bred local artist's outlook. The picture is both landscape and still life, and contrasts the view outside a window with a chair inside. The vista appears ancient while the chair is modern, but they are linked by vivid blue and precise depiction.

In addition to paintings, the show includes drypoint prints, terra cotta sculpture, silver jewelry and a video-based installation.

Hernandez is not a traditionalist, even in her approach to still lifes, which she paints from memory rather than models. Yet a classical sensibility tempers even her more experimental works, such as the video of surf and shore projected through two dangling, transparent humanoids that produce multiple shadows and reflections.

The artist's recent work includes two-tiered pictures in which painted linen panels are partially pulled back to reveal what's rendered beneath: sets of male and female figures, or just a pair of eyes.

There also are small pictures inside boxes, which integrate objects that might be subjects of still lifes.

These painting-sculpture hybrids highlight not only the artist's craft, but also the limits of our perception. One of the most modern things about Hernandez is that she, although painting in a realist style, forgoes the omniscience of the Old Masters. Whether partially hiding an image behind a linen flap or dividing a landscape across three windows, Hernandez emphasizes a finite individual perspective.

Anamario Hernandez: The Force of Fragility On view through Jan. 30 at the Mexican Cultural Institute, 2829 16th St. NW. 202-728-1628. instituteofmexicocdc.org.



DOLY NOTED PAINTERS/HILLYER ART SPACE

Elizabeth Peak

The title of Elizabeth Peak's show at the Washington Printmakers Gallery, "Landscape Through Multiple Lenses," underplays the Charlottesville, Va., artist's abilities. She doesn't simply detach one lens and affix another. Her work demonstrates mastery of three different modes: collage, line etching and three-plate color printing.

Peak spent much of her childhood in the Great Plains, which she recalls in such detail-rich monochromatic etchings as "Approaching the Rockies," a wide-screen vista that stretches a cloud-stuffed sky across four sheets of paper. Peak also uses this process for vivid portraits of animals, notably a slumbering giraffe.

The three-color works, which meld pigments with the subtlety of watercolor, include an expressionist vision of a rainforest in Washington state. (It's similar in tone to an exuberant collage, "Large Pond," in which slivers of paper become reeds, ripples and leaves.) More often, Peak employs

the tricolor print for small-town scenes, such as a view of Charleston, S.C., at what may be dawn or twilight. In mood, these unpopulated cityscapes are akin to the depictions of lonely prairie vignettes. Yet they were crafted with techniques that are, impressively, worlds apart.

Elizabeth Peak: Landscape Through Multiple Lenses On view through Jan. 31 at Washington Printmakers Gallery, 1641 Wisconsin Ave. NW. 202-669-1497. washingtonprintmakers.com.

Duly Noted Painters and Jack Warner

Duly Noted Painters Matthew Malone and Kurtis Cepetelli work together, and sometimes even simultaneously, on large scenes of everyday life. They recently took their collaboration to Cuba, where they stayed in a small fishing village. The result is "Cuba," at Hillyer Art Space, whose pictures are as rough-edged as the canvas beneath them.

Charcoal sketches underlie the

"Dos Hermanos" is one of the charcoal sketches by Duly Noted Painters, a Washington duo consisting of Matthew Malone and Kurtis Cepetelli, in the "Cuba" exhibition at Hillyer Art Space.

D.C. duo's neo-expressionist style, whose looseness always appears open to one more brushstroke or paint splash. The sparest of these pictures is little more than a drawing, accented by some fluid blue that suggests water. A darker shade of the same color dominates the show's magnum opus, a landscape in which a storm seems to be massing in the right-hand corner. The potential violence of tropical weather is an ideal subject for the pair's tumultuous style.

In the adjacent gallery, a large painting titled "Denial" has a similarly agitated character: thick black drips dominate one side, and a warhead-like shape bristles at the center. The canvas is part of "Heuristic Defenses," a show by Jack Warner, who is not primarily a painter. A former Marine, the local artist uses military-like elements in assemblages that represent both physical and psychological bulwarks.

A helmet and a pentagon carved from wood, as well as a crutch, feature in these brawny pieces, which also incorporate

chains, sand bags and metal cables. Warner's pieces aren't overwhelming in scale, and bar access to only small areas of the space. Metaphorically, though, the barricades are formidable.

Duly Noted Painters: Cuba and Jack Warner: Heuristic Defenses On view through Jan. 30 at Hillyer Art Space, 9 Hillyer Ct. NW. 202-338-0680. hillyerartspace.org.

Fred Zafran

The cult of the selfie makes a snapshot's human subject the measure of all things. More subtly, and artfully, Fred Zafran's photographs demonstrate that the world exists even when no one's eying the camera.

The exemplary image in Zafran's "Memories of the Present" depicts a street occupied only by shadows, including the heads and elongated forms of two out-of-frame persons. In other pictures in the Multiple Exposures Gallery show, faces are obscured or turned away, even when in the foreground. Only the photographer is looking.

The settings of these large-format photos are mostly urban, and occasionally include recognizable places or things: a D6 bus, the C&O Canal, the corner of 14th and G streets NW. But Zafran is not concerned with documentary value. The gallery calls the series "an allegory of being, time and memory." It chronicles moments that happened, yet weren't seen.

Although that may sound more philosophical than visual, Zafran is attuned to color, composition and juxtaposition. The heavy gray and tan pictures are punctuated by hot colors and flashy gear, including a red coat and orange sneakers. Even when no one seems to be paying attention, people still want to be noticed.

Memories of the Present: New Photography by Fred Zafran On view through Feb. 14 at Multiple Exposures Gallery, Torpedo Factory, 105 N. Union St., Alexandria. 703-683-2205. multipleexposuresgallery.com. style@washpost.com

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