

GALLERIES

A swirl of color and a universe of chaos

BY MARK JENKINS

At the beginning of the 20th century, the industrialized world started to pick up speed, and painters and poets vowed to keep pace. Italy's Futurism and Britain's Vorticism celebrated movement and even violence, enthusiasms that lost some appeal because of two world wars.

Those "isms" are largely forgotten, but their instincts survive in the work of Chee-Keong Kung. The pictures in the Singapore-born Virginian's "Adjacent Amplitudes," at Hillyer Art Space, are tornadoes of color and (mostly) straight lines.

Although the local artist's pictures seem to bustle, they're actually made slowly. Kung employs the popular strategy of building his intricate compositions gesture by gesture, each addition a carefully considered reaction to the one before it. "For me, painting stills the mind," he writes of this measured approach.

The final results, though, are dense and kinetic: hundreds of black-ink lines and looser brushstrokes, atop pastel washes and overlaid with isolated blocks of pure, bright hues. The image is abstract, yet the emphasis on lines suggests traditional illustration, printmaking and even comics. Although Kung's pictures depict only the process of making them, they conjure a universe of change, instability and chaos. Bit by deliberate bit, the artist assembles visual explosions.

Also at Hillyer, sculptor Adam Bradley's "Desperate Ones" depict motion in a classical mode by showing the body in frozen yet vital poses. That's the human body, mostly, although the D.C. artist's small cast-bronze and cast-aluminum figures have the heads of fish or birds. (This is meant to represent animal instinct.) The creatures circle a much larger female statue whose curves are made of shards of wood attached to a frame. It resembles a rougher-surfaced enlargement of one of those wooden anatomy models, but its jagged edges and supple pose give it a dynamism that could almost be termed life-force.

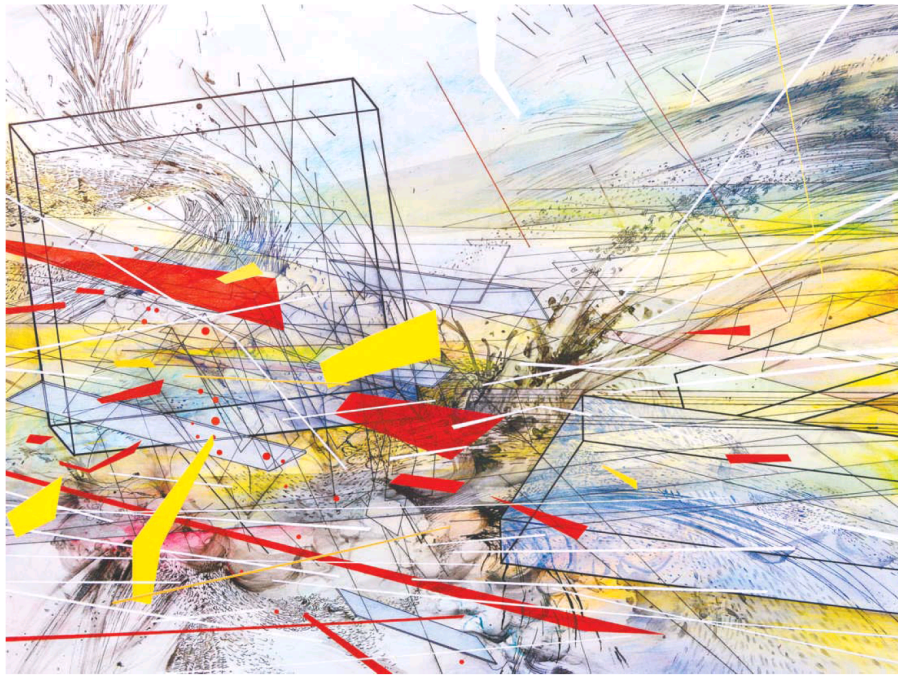
Chee-Keong Kung: Adjacent Amplitudes and Adam Bradley: Desperate Ones On view through Thursday at Hillyer Art Space, 9 Hillyer Ct. NW. 202-338-0680. hillyerartspace.org.

Alison Rash

While Kung inserts the occasional irregularly shaped chunk of color, Alison Rash once employed hundreds of them. The Nebraska artist's quadrilaterals, in contrasting bright and neutral hues, cascaded like hard-edged geometric raindrops. There are some examples of that style in "Didn't You Once Date Picasso?" Rash's show at Adah Rose Gallery.

But her newer paintings are more likely to use triangles, some of them much larger than their four-sided precursors. The more recent pictures also are freer, at least in places.

The selection includes works on paper characterized by white backgrounds and spontaneous



CHEE-KEONG KUNG/HILLYER ART SPACE



ADAM BRADLEY/HILLYER ART SPACE

ABOVE: Singapore-born Virginia artist Chee-Keong Kung's "Tangent" is on view at Hillyer Art Space. His other works there have a hurried feeling even though they are made pain-stakingly, composed gesture by gesture, each addition a reaction to the one before.

LEFT: Also at Hillyer, Adam Bradley's sculptures show the human body with the heads of fish or birds, like this one, "Arm Salesman." His "Desperate Ones" at the gallery depict motion in a classical mode.

Elissa Farrow-Savos and Tatyana Schrenko sculpt female figures from polymer clay and wood, respectively. Farrow-Savos often attaches her women to found objects, yielding human-mechanical hybrids. Merged with a unicycle or a wheeled stand, these creatures are whimsical and a little eerie. The artist also incorporates old photos into her work, and her titles indicate that her half-there people represent the decay of memory.

Schrenko, who works mostly in wood, has placed one of her creations on a sort of skateboard. But the essential thing about her Modigliani-thin women is that they're just faces summoned from sinuous arcs of polished wood. The material is as important as the visage that emerges

from it. Jaclyn Martin's "The Days That Are No More" is a winged human head that seems ancient and elegant. Some of her other pieces, though, are more abstract. They rely on elemental form and the qualities of various minerals. So does Acton's work, most notably when it contrasts rough rock with nearly translucent Italian alabaster. The sculptor doesn't emulate the human form, but he can make stone appear almost as delicate as flesh.

Figuratively Speaking . . . On view through Jan. 9 at 1111 Pennsylvania Ave. NW. 202-783-2963. zenithgallery.com.

Matina Marki Tillman

Connecticut printmaker Matina Marki Tillman was born and raised in Greece, a country she keeps with her through art. Many of the likenesses in "Humanography," her show at Washington Printmakers Gallery, were inspired by poems and films from her native land. The artist's characters are usually female and often themselves artists: a painter, a dancer, a performer who stands behind an array of theatrical masks, ready to play any role. Another theme is absence. The simple but telling props include an empty chair and bare clothes hangers.

Tillman begins with drawings, usually in charcoal or pencil, which in the final prints result in rich grays and soft details. Long tresses, fabric folds and feathered plumes are all carefully and realistically rendered. The images are transferred using Solarplate technology, which reduces the amount of toxic chemicals. This selection includes a collage and a few prints with touches of color. But the strongest pictures are all in shades of gray, a traditional mode for prints that evoke the classical world.

Humanography: An Exhibition by Matina Marki Tillman On view through Dec. 27 at Washington Printmakers Gallery, 1641 Wisconsin Ave. NW. 202-669-1497. washingtonprintmakers.com. style@washpost.com

Jenkins is a freelance writer.

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forms, although they include areas that could have been lifted from one of the paintings. Tighter and more assertive, some new compositions pit crisply defined triangles, often silver, against smeared or squeegeed aqua or purple. The triangular forms can be separate from the craggy-textured regions, or be incorporated into them. Either way, the juxtaposition endows Rash's latest work with energy and unity.

Allison Rash: "Didn't You Once Date Picasso?" On view through Dec. 31 at Adah Rose Gallery, 3766 Howard Ave., Kensington. 301-922-0162. adahrosegallery.com.

Figuratively Speaking . . .

The human figure features in many but not all of the pieces in "Figuratively Speaking . . ." a show of five local artists in the Zenith Gallery-curated lobby space at 1111 Pennsylvania Ave. NW. The principal connection between people and Jan Paul Acton's stone or ceramic towers is that both stand upright. Mary Hourihan Lynch's shaped canvases, dabbed with oils and sometimes rust, assume such primal but non-human shapes as a circle or a cross. They're paintings that seem to be cut from wood or stone.



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