

GALLERIES

BY MARK JENKINS

Such aesthetic free-for-all as Artomatic are always packed with nerd art: work inspired by comic books, animation and sword-and-sorcery illustrations. JD Deardourff's "Splash" is in this tradition, yet apart from it. As the title of the Hillier Art Space show announces, Deardourff is inspired by the "splash page" that opens superhero comics. But his screenprints are all splash and no superhero. The action comes from color and composition.

Deardourff's flamboyant style descends from that of Jack Kirby, the most influential Marvel artist during the decade that introduced Thor, the Hulk and the Fantastic Four. Black lines, yellow bolts and red bursts conjure an explosive universe where big bangs are routine. If these unpeopled pictures were backdrops for a particular character, he might be named Volcano Man.

Ironically, the day-glo colors are much brighter than the ones allowed by the cheap printing and pulpy paper used in Kirby's day. Yet the black outlines are crucial to the artist's style, as Deardourff demonstrates by including one piece that forgoes them. It's more My Little Pony than Silver Surfer.

"Splash" isn't all Marvel homage. The complex, playfully allusive titles refer to AC/DC, Bob Dylan and professional sports. Deardourff also shows an interest in architecture, even if most of his buildings are shown from the vantage point of someone swinging or swooping through the sky. Even without costumed battlers, these city- and space-scapes are epic.

Fawna Xiao's "Half Wild," also at Hillier, uses many of the same elements as its predecessor, "Lost Land." Both involve arraying jagged blocks of color to suggest boulders, icebergs and mountains. Most of these single-edition prints are simply in black and gray, like the black-and-white landscape photos that inspired them, while a few are in shades of blue.

The new addition to the D.C. artist's style is the use of wood. Three of the minimalist compositions are printed on lengths of wood, the flat areas of pigment in contrast to the medium's grain. Several small pieces are mounted in whitewashed wooden frames that are larger than the image they surround. Thus Xiao reintroduces natural texture into prints that reduce rocky forms to pure shape and color.

JD DEARDOURFF: SPLASH!
FAWNA XIAO: HALF WILD
On view through Feb. 1 at Hillier Art Space, 9 Hillier Court NW; 202-338-0680; hillierartspace.org

David Hicks

Flowers, vegetables and wasp's nests are among the natural forms emulated in ceramicist David Hicks's recent work, "Nucleus," at Cross Mackenzie Gallery. The artist lives in California's heavily agricultural San Joaquin Valley, and its products inspire many of the objects he makes and then groups



POW! JD Deardourff's "MAYDAY" evokes the action of classic comics, but without the superheroes.

COURTESY JD DEARDOURFF AND HILLIER ART SPACE

into intriguing compositions.

Yet Hicks doesn't glaze or paint his creations in bright reds or greens so they more closely resemble blooms or leaves. He employs mineral-like tones and rough textures that suggest rocks, bones or branches. The pieces are coated in the crusty residue of improvised slips — Hicks says he doesn't measure the ingredients or record what he puts in them — so they appear to have been bathed in lava, or excavated after centuries underground. However elegantly formed, his work doesn't pretend to consist of anything other than clay and dirt.

The process seldom ends with the fabrication of an individual item. Most of "Nucleus" consists of assemblages, arranged together on armatures or — in one case — hung from the wall on wires of varying lengths. Some of the sets are limited to a narrow palette, most notably a cluster that's all pink and gray, flowery and earthy at the same time. Others show a wider range of hues, but always with a weathered finish. Hicks's mastery is reflected not only in the way he crafts these buds, pods and sticks, but also in how he puts them together.

DAVID HICKS: NUCLEUS
On view through Feb. 28 at Cross Mackenzie Gallery, 2026 R St. NW; 202-333-7970; crossmackenzie.com



DAVID HICKS/CROSS MACKENZIE GALLERY

CLAY AND DIRT: In "Still Life (In Frost)," David Hicks brings his ceramic creations together in a composition.

François Le Gall

François Le Gall's "Multiple States" includes a painting, selected by Alex Gallery for the postcard to publicize the show, that could be seen as the slats of a barn, decayed enough on one side to allow sunlight to shine through. It's a connection the artist himself must have made, since the picture is subtitled "La Grange," French for "barn."

But the artist probably didn't set out to conjure a real structure in that work, whose main title is "BW/V #3." Le Gall is an abstractionist, and the elements of that painting recur in his pictures, many in a series titled "Verticales." The D.C.-based French artist layers black acrylic pigment with bold strokes of a squeegee or palette knife, sometimes leaving hints of white canvas.

The show includes many varia-

works on paper downstairs in Gallery A. But the dominant mode is dark, strong and physical. Any glimmers of white that might remain are just a bonus.

FRANÇOIS LE GALL: MULTIPLE STATES

On view through Jan. 31 at Alex Gallery, 2106 R St. NW; 202-667-2599; alexgalleries.com

Jessica Cebra

"Cave," Jessica Cebra's installation at Transformer, has two agendas. The first is simply to make the already tiny space even more claustrophobic. The local artist has used cardboard, mostly painted gray, to construct a new ceiling, lower and irregular in height. Most adults will have to stoop to enter this temporary grotto, which guarantees a reaction. It's impossible to ignore an artwork that requires viewers to contort themselves to enter, and to use flashlights — they're provided — to explore its shadowy recesses.

Inside, the space is embellished with squares of shiny silver and gold paper, like reptilian scales, and a strand of diamond-shaped pink lights. Amid these elements are dozens of museum postcards, depicting fine- and decorative-art objects, that Cebra has collected over the years. A student of library science and historic preservation, the artist has created a sort of sham World Heritage site, a cross between a museum gift shop and the sort of cave that conceals Paleolithic paintings.

Intriguingly, Cebra's interest in preserving and cataloguing is here combined with willful destruction. Those postcards won't come off the wall intact, so this installation marks the end of that collection. "Cave" is a place for conserving, but also for letting go.

ON TV

A sampling of fine arts on television for the week of Jan. 19-25
SUNDAY, JAN. 19

C-SPAN2, 10:45 a.m.-noon	"BookTV in Chattanooga, Tenn." visits literary sites within the city and interviews several of its authors, including David Sachman, Sam Elliott, Debora Levine, John Wheeler and Bill Hull.
WETA, 11-11:30 a.m.	"WETA Arts" interviews local artist Mia Feuer about her new exhibition at the Corcoran Gallery, "An Unkindness," examining the interaction between the synthetic and natural worlds, and discusses the Hirshhorn Museum's new exhibit, "Damage Control: Art and Destruction Since 1950."
Smithsonian Channel, noon-1 p.m.	"Museum Secrets Revealed: Tunisia" visits the Bardo Museum in Tunis, which contains thousands of artifacts from local excavations dating from the Carthaginian, Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman periods.
MPT2, 6-6:30 p.m.	"Chesapeake Collectibles" looks at a mysterious painting, an Art Deco enameled bracelet, a Chinese scroll and Santa Clara wedding pottery.
Ovation, 7:30-8 p.m.	"The Art of: Fashion" looks at three designers who take an art-inspired approach to fashion.
Travel Channel, 10-11 p.m.	"Castle Secrets and Legends" explores castles, manor houses and mansions, including a German castle where a real-life Dr. Frankenstein worked and Highclere Castle, the setting for "Downton Abbey."

MONDAY, JAN. 20

WETA and MPT, 8-9 p.m.	"Antiques Roadshow" looks at the work of James Castle at the Boise Art Museum and appraises an 1822 letter from Thomas Jefferson, a Babe Ruth Candy Club membership card and a ruby-and-diamond necklace.
MPT, 9-10 p.m.; WETA, 10-11 p.m.	In Tulsa, "Antiques Roadshow" appraises an 1826 English gadget cane, a 1931 Oscar Mayer in-store display and a circa-1600 Ming Dynasty cast bronze guardian figure.
Smithsonian, 9-10 p.m.	"Museum Secrets Revealed: Chateau de Versailles" visits the palace on the outskirts of Paris that now serves as a museum, with artifacts representing revolutionaries and royalty, including the encrypted letters of Marie Antoinette.

TUESDAY, JAN. 21

HBO, 6:30-7 p.m.	On "Josh Groban: A YoungArts Masterclass," aspiring singers join Groban for a workshop and an opportunity to perform with him in Boston.
WETA and MPT, 9-11:30 p.m.	"American Masters: Salinger" looks at the life of J.D. Salinger, the influential writer who stepped away from the public eye after the success of his 1951 novel "The Catcher in the Rye."
WHUT, 7:30-8 p.m.	"This Old House" visits a neighborhood water tank disguised as a Greek temple.

THURSDAY, JAN. 23

MPT2, midnight-12:30 a.m.	"Theater Talk" interviews drama critic and entertainment reporter Jeremy Gerard, who discusses his new book "Wynn Place Show."
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SATURDAY, JAN. 25

HBO2, 12:15-1:45 p.m.	"Six by Sondheim" profiles Broadway lyricist and composer Stephen Sondheim through the creation and performance of six of his songs.
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— Christian Hettinger



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

THE GATE

Despite his popular portrayal as a charming, country bumpkin, President Abraham Lincoln had an affinity for progressive technology and embraced modern warfare discoveries, particularly those he believed might help end the Civil War. The "Abraham Lincoln and the Technology of War" exhibition explores his particular interest in and utilization of these groundbreaking 19th-century technological inventions, as well as the modern technology's military and societal importance and influence. The exhibit will be on view through July 6 at the Ford's Theatre Center for Education and Leadership in Washington.

1 The number of U.S. presidents to hold a patent. In 1849, Lincoln received a patent for a device to buoy vessels over shoals and river obstructions. A model replica of his original patent is on display in the exhibit.

It took the three-person curatorial team from Lincoln

ALVIN AILEY
AMERICAN DANCE THEATER
Robert Battle
Artistic Director
Macazumi Chava