

Plants form his medium and his message

BY MARK JENKINS

Handmade paper, commonly used in Japanese art and decoration, has long appealed to Western printmakers. D.C. artist Patterson Clark makes his own paper, as well as the pigments and printing woodblocks he employs, but not simply because he likes the resulting textures and hues. "Alienweeds: Recent Works by Patterson Clark," at McLean Project for the Arts, repurposes the leaves, stalks and trunks of some of the invasive species he helps remove from local landscapes during volunteer weed-whacking missions.

Clark, a Washington Post graphics editor, depicts foliage and tools, usually evoking bygone eras, in a palette that emphasizes earth tones (plus black made from the soot of burned weeds). Sometimes, he depicts human-made items that harshly echo natural forms, such as vine-like coils of barbed wire. In several prints, a tree trunk stands near a telephone pole, its industrial-age parody. The artist also toys with commercial iconography, offering an "11-Weed Blend" logo that mocks upscale coffee merchandising.

This sort of gentle commentary is typical of Clark and his project. After all, English ivy, garlic mustard and the tree of heaven — chopped here into an engraved panel — are not the scariest of monsters. So it's apt that the artists' response is brushed and translucent: He notes that his weed-based pigments are "fugitive" and will disappear over time. If only the same were true of the inconvertible vegetation he uses to make them.



"Colors of La Boca, Argentina" is among works by Rockville-based painter Chris Luckman that are on view at Gallery B in Bethesda.

COURTESY CHRIS LUCKMAN AND GALLERY B

Also at the McLean venue is a new installation of "Voyage of Discovery," shown this spring at the American Association for the Advancement of Sciences downtown Washington headquarters. Working both separately and in collaboration, Michele Banks, Jessica Beels and Elynn Weiss depict ominous changes in the warming Arctic. This show, too, depicts invasive life forms, focusing on microbes that have begun to infiltrate that region. Rendered mostly in shades of blue, green and white that evoke water and ice, the artworks have a pristine beauty, but warn of a polluted future.

Alienweeds: Recent Works by Patterson Clark; Voyage of Discovery; Michele Banks, Jessica Beels and Elynn Weiss On view through Oct. 25 at McLean Project for the Arts, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. 703-790-1955; www.mppart.org.

Kim, Luckman and Tkabladze

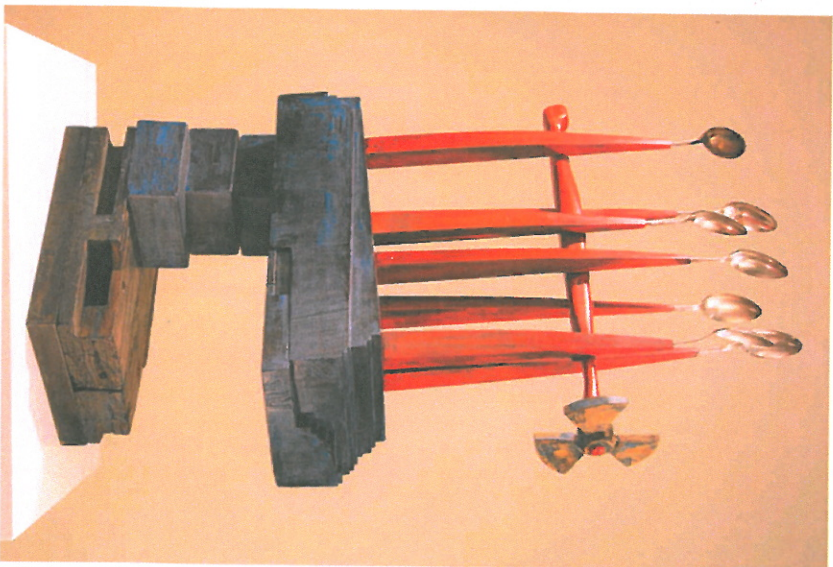
The three artists in Gallery B's current show are a worldly lot, but otherwise have little in common. Rockville-based painter Chris Luckman executes loosely representational views from her travels to picturesque

climes, including China, Jordan, Iceland and Argentina. George Tkabladze, who was born in then-Soviet Georgia and now lives in Northern Virginia, combines wood, stone and found objects into whimsical assemblages, some of which resemble steampunk machines.

Gongsan Kim's work is simpler and starker, for good reason. The Seoul-born Marylander evokes her father's origins in North Korea with minimalist works that suggest both the violence and regimentation of existence under a totalitarian regime. Kim burns patterns into linen or burlap. Some of the works are layered, with a level visible beneath the blackened holes; one piece stretches rough but evenly spaced fibers across the surface, another means of offering mayhem with order. Where much austere minimalist art conjures pure mathematical patterns, detached from both maker and observer, Kim's terse works are hauntingly human.

Gongsan Kim, Chris Luckman and George Tkabladze On view through Oct. 25 at Gallery B, 7700 Wisconsin Ave., Suite E, Bethesda. 301-215-7990; www.bethesda.org/bethesda/gallery-b.

IN THE GALLERIES



George Tkabladze combines wood, stone and found objects into whimsical assemblages like "On the Edge," on view at Gallery B.

COURTESY GEORGE TKABLADE AND GALLERY B

Herry and Gainer

Memory is a frequent subject of contemporary art, perhaps because its subjective, imperfect nature suits the vogue for fragmented, collaged imagery. At Hillier Art Space, both Jeffery Herry and Lee Gainer are visualizing their recollections: Herry's "Objects of My Devotion" recombines ceramic forms that recall the artist's hobbyist mother's "tragically whimsical" stoneware. Gainer's "Photo Album" distills snapshots into line drawings that are superimposed to create dense,

Cross MacKenzie Gallery. Herry uses craft-shop molds to forge ceramic banalities. But where McConnell assembles gnomes and bunnies into massive stupa-like structures, Herry links them in simpler juxtapositions. This show features Easter-basket strangles, including eggs, lambs and rabbits, but also eagles and babies, fused incongruously together, the figures retain their essential trickiness, yet are also a bit creepy.

Jeffery Herry: Objects of My Devotion; Lee Gainer: Photo Album On view through Nov. 1 at Hillier Art Space, 9 Hillier Court NW. 202-338-0325; www.hillierartspace.org.

Carol Leadbetter

Only one of the pictures in Carol Leadbetter's "Floral Portrait" includes superimposed Chinese characters, but there's an Asian vibe to all the close-ups of blossoms and leaves she's showing at Waverly Street Gallery. The local artist photographs flowers and digitally manipulates (or sometimes removes) the colors; she then prints them on sheets of unryu, textured Japanese mulberry paper with visible fibers, and seals them with a waxy coating.

Each image is paired with a quotation from the likes of Thoreau, Marcus Aurelius or Ansel Adams, whose rich black-and-white landscapes may have inspired Leadbetter's series of monochromatic florals. The colors are often muted, but sometimes the artist pits pale yellow or pink against bolder hues. The contrast gives these delicate photo-illustrations, mostly suitable for a traditional Japanese teahouse, an infusion of pop-art swagger.

Floral Portrait: A Photographic Study of Form and Texture by Carol Leadbetter On view through Nov. 8 at Waverly Street Gallery, 4600 EastWest Hwy., Bethesda. 301-951-9441; waverlystreetgallery.com.

Jenkins is a freelance writer.