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Museums

In the galleries: An exploration of Irish identity is at the heart of a Hillyer exhibit.



HANDOUT IMAGE: Ursula Burke's "Balaclava Bust," Parian porcelain, 2014. (Ursula Burke/Hillyer Art Space)

By Mark Jenkins June 17

In the Easter Rising of April 1916, Irish nationalists rebelled against British rule, establishing their headquarters at Dublin's main post office. That building figures into a painting in "Repression/Resurgence/Reemergence," an exhibition at Hillyer Art Space organized by the D.C. Irish arts group Solas Nua.

Politics and history are only indirectly the subjects of the show, curated by Dublin-bred local painter Jackie Hoysted. Identity is the main concern of the 13 participants, who include Irish Americans and residents of Ireland who hail from other lands.

That's not to say that the paintings, drawings, sculptures and videos are apolitical. Erin Devine's multimedia "Communion" recalls a 1971 Belfast-to-Dublin train trip by 49 women who took condoms to the republic, where they were illegal.




The Project Twins (Michael and James Fitzgerald) fill the longest wall with banners whose stark images challenge authority and the Church: One shows a hand with its middle finger raised and the other digits apparently chopped off

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hand with its middle finger raised and the other digits apparently chopped off. More gently, Ursula Burke's "Belfast Riot" is depicted in embroidery, as if to give feminine grace to male mayhem. The majority of the artists are women, and they sometimes look beyond Ireland's borders.

Maryanne Pollock, who lived in Cairo, combines Celtic and Islamic decorative motifs. Dragana Jurisic's "100 Muses & Her Mother & Her Daughters" is a series of nine photographic portraits of nude women asked to pose as one of the nine Greek muses. The figures are superimposed to manifest strength in numbers, and perhaps so they don't resemble upscale pin-ups.



Carla Fuentes painting a mural depicting Addison Scurlock at the former building of the Washington Afro-American Newspaper. (Former Residence of the Ambassadors of Spain)

Video maker and painter Bart O'Reilly comes closest to traditional symbolism. His abstract canvases showcase drips, not harps or shamrocks, but they're dominated by green. One of his pictures could flap over that storied post office as a flag of the new Ireland, but — like much of this work — it exemplifies the international art scene as surely as

any one country.

Repression/Resurgence/Reemergence: One Hundred Years of Re-possessing and Re-appropriating Irish Identity Through June 26 at Hillyer Art Space, 9 Hillyer Ct. NW. 202-338-0325. hillyerartspace.org.



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Kitty Klaidman

Inspired by sojourns in Europe and Canada, Kitty Klaidman paints exuberant landscapes, from impressionistic to abstract. But their brightness is shadowed by some of the earliest work in "A 30 Year Survey," the local artist's retrospective at Marsha Mateyka Gallery. Made between 1989 and 1991, the pictures recall Klaidman's childhood in what is now Slovakia, where she and her family hid from the Nazis.

Included are views into the forest and down from a crawl-space hideout in her family home. They're paired with photo-derived pieces that show the actual places or incorporate portraits of departed family members. The woodland scenes aren't especially ominous, but a black-and-white one effectively

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conveys a young girl's tear.

In summertime Normandy, Klaidman found beguiling light and abandoned World War II material, left in the water as a sort of monument. Acrylic-wash closeups of colorfully mottled Roman walls also evoke the past, while pointing the artist toward a freer style that flowered in the intricately patterned "Salt Spring Islands" paintings and drawings of the past six years. The most recent works are handsome abstractions, segmented into three or four squares. Untitled, their gemlike facets suggest layers of history.

Kitty Klaidman: A 30 Year Survey Through June 25 at Marsha Mateyka Gallery, 2012 R St. NW. 202-328-0088.
marshamateykgallery.com.



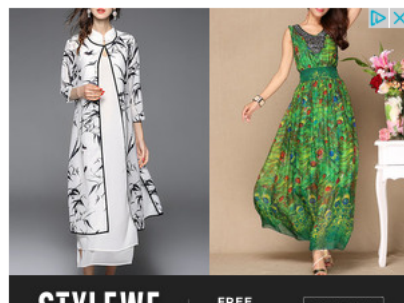
Leslie Holt. "UNSPEAKABLE (Guernica Sketch 3)," 2016, acrylic and embroidery on canvas. (Leslie Holt/39th Street Gallery)

Spanish Illustrators

The current attraction at the Former Residence of the Ambassadors of Spain is a show of commercial art, but its focus is on art, not commercialism. "Spanish Illustrators: The Color of Optimism" surveys 28 younger artists whose endeavors include children's books, album covers and fashion spreads. Even the last category accentuates the conceptual, with erotically charged renderings that celebrate the human body rather than any particular brand. The range of styles is broad,

and the influences include European surrealism, British alt-rock and American comics innovators such as Will Eisner and Frank Miller.

Adding spontaneity to the show, two of the artists visited and made murals on the premises. Ricardo Cavolo's red, white and blue "Love Story" anthropomorphizes Spain and the United States, who coo at each other across the Atlantic. Carla Fuentes did a group portrait of some of her favorite Spanish artists. Fuentes also hit the streets, in collaboration with D.C. Murals, to depict Addison Scurlock, leading photographer of the local African American community for much of the 20th century. Fuentes has left town, but her tribute should remain on the wall of 1802 11th St. NW for years to come.



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Spanish Illustrators: The Color of Optimism Through June 26 at the Former Residence of the Ambassadors of Spain, 2801 16th St. NW. spainculture.us.

Kristen Hayes

and Tatiane Hofstadler

Both Kristen Hayes and Tatiane Hofstadler make vivid multi-level paintings, but Hayes's are diaphanous and biomorphic, whereas Hofstadler's are opaque and developed by excavation. The two artists, showing together at P Street Gallerie, are local, although Hofstadler will soon return to her native Brazil.

Hayes employs acrylic, pastel, pencil and spray paint, but she relies on watercolor and water-based ink. Her vibrant "Spirit Tree" series loosely depicts trunks and branches, and also evokes fruit, neural networks and distant galaxies. Hofstadler applies multiple coats of acrylic and then sands to reveal submerged strata. Each uses strong hues. Hayes's style is most cogent at its most colorful, but Hofstadler's strongest canvas is mostly white, with glimmers of green, red and black to hint at unknowable depths.

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Kristen Hayes & Tatiane Hofstadler Through June 25 at P Street Gallerie, 3235 P St. NW. 202-333-4868. pstreetgallerie.com.

Leslie Holt

The large, densely populated tableaux of Picasso's "Guernica" yields a few of its anguished figures to the pictures in "Unspeakable," Leslie Holt's show at 39th Street Gallery. The details, which also borrow from Van Gogh and Kathe Kollwitz, aren't painted, however. They're stitched into canvases that are mostly dominated by yellow, red and neon-orange acrylic pigment, thinned and stained in the manner of Morris Louis. Holt's colors can be seen as purely abstract, or as signifying chaos and violence, much as the figures can represent either wartime horrors or more personal ones.

Unspeakable: Paintings by Leslie Holt Through June 25 at 39th Street Gallery, 3901 Rhode Island Ave., second floor. 202-487-8458. 39thstreetgallery.org.

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