

IN THE GALLERIES

These studies sing the body electric

BY MARK JENKINS

Once a crucial part of a visual artist's repertoire, the figure study is far less important in the photographic era. All 40 artists in Hillyer Art Space's "Flesh & Bone II" may have mastered life drawing, but few of them demonstrate the need to prove it. Representing the human body is essential to pieces such as Ghislaine Fremaux's outsize drawing of a male nude, glistening not with sweat but with resin. It's tangential, though, to many more of the works.

Kirsty Little's wood-and-wire sculpture suggests just a pair of eyelashes. Kevin Quiles Bonilla's wispy photo-derived faces are secondary to the 100 small circles of recycled paper that contain them. Ambience trumps corporeality in photos such as Gabriela Augero's diptych of a person at a window and Armaghan Mehrabian's study of a shrouded woman in a darkened space. Ashley Smith's female seminude is mostly a photograph, but with fabric in place of pubic hair. In Yikui Gu's collage-drawing of American archetypes, the human presence is a grimacing Dick Cheney.

It's hardly surprising that the artists, many from this region but some from New York and beyond, do not share an aesthetic. Juror Lorelle Rau's selection stresses range, not cohesion. Yet many of the most memorable entries are realistic, and they're striking not just when they're intimate on a monumental scale, such as Fremaux's nude or Ming Ying Hong's charcoal drawing of fingers kneading a bare belly. Far smaller yet equally as intriguing is Steven Labadessa's neoclassical oil of a freckled, red-haired woman. The subject looks



Kirsty Little, "Falling," wall sculpture with wood and wire, on view at Hillyer Art Space.

straight at the viewer, calmly but with a soulfulness that indicates she's more than flesh and bone.

Flesh & Bone II On view through July 31 at Hillyer Art Space, 9 Hillyer Ct. NW. 202-338-0325. hillyerartspace.org.

POP of Kolor

One of American fine art's most accessible manifestations, pop art is at home in museums around the globe. It's also refracted and repurposed in shows such as "POP of Kolor," a two-woman exhibition at the Korean Cultural Center. Kwangyeon Song appropriates Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein works for her mixed-media pieces; Kyungjoo Park seems more inspired by commercial art, Warhol's field for the proverbial 15 minutes before he became famous. Song combines painted,

artworks, unable or unwilling to merge.

Park presents cartoon-style images of everyday and mostly modern things: sunglasses, handbags, lightbulbs, airplanes, hearts and bras (and bras with hearts on them). Such consumer icons appear in drawings, relief sculptures and large, toylike holograms. All are brightly colored, save for the black-and-white wallpaper that repeats the same items. The overall effect resembles a stroll through a shopping mall that caters to wishes that might be simple and open, or complex and hidden.

POP of Kolor On view through Aug. 1 at the Korean Cultural Center, 2370 Massachusetts Ave. NW. 202-939-5688. koreanculturedc.org.

Julia Bloom and Susan Hostetler

A grand swoop of life-size, varicolored birds covers most of the largest uninterrupted wall of the high-ceilinged Athenaeum, where "The Beauty of Inflections" is on display. The birds, made primarily of clay, are the work of District-based artist Susan Hostetler. They flock alongside painted-stick sculptures by Julia Bloom, also of the District, whose constructions suggest nests and baskets but are too airy to be either.

The space defined by birds and branches is central to the effect. Bloom's and Hostetler's pieces are generally mounted close to the white walls, so they throw shadows in shifting patterns. Both artists explore the same motifs in one-dimensional works on paper or Mylar. The grids and the birds remain compelling when rendered loosely in,

gouache and graphite. Bloom's and Hostetler's celebrations of nature are also explorations of abstract form.

Julia Bloom and Susan Hostetler: The Beauty of Inflections On view through July 31 at the Athenaeum, 201 Prince St., Alexandria. 703-548-0035. nvfaa.org.

Christie Neptune

White walls, standard in modern-art galleries, are designed not to compete with what's on display. They serve another function in Christie Neptune's "She Fell From Normalcy," a Hamiltonian Gallery show of text, installations and photographic images, both still and moving. In some of the videos, two black women in white undies explore an all-white space, probing the box's sides. The cell that holds them may

represent "the hegemonic system of whiteness" the New York artist confronts, according to the gallery's notes.

"I wanted out of my skin... so I began to pull at my labels," explains the text with a video of a woman who's photographing herself. Another piece lists tired, absurd and yet not entirely banished slurs against African Americans. Like many contemporary artists, Neptune intends to use her work to establish and proclaim her individual identity. But before she can do that, she recognizes, she must dispel racial stereotypes that — as recent events have made clear — are still potent and oppressive.

Christie Neptune: She Fell From Normalcy On view through Saturday at Hamiltonian Gallery, 1353 U St. NW, Suite 101. 202-332-1116. hamiltoniangallery.com.

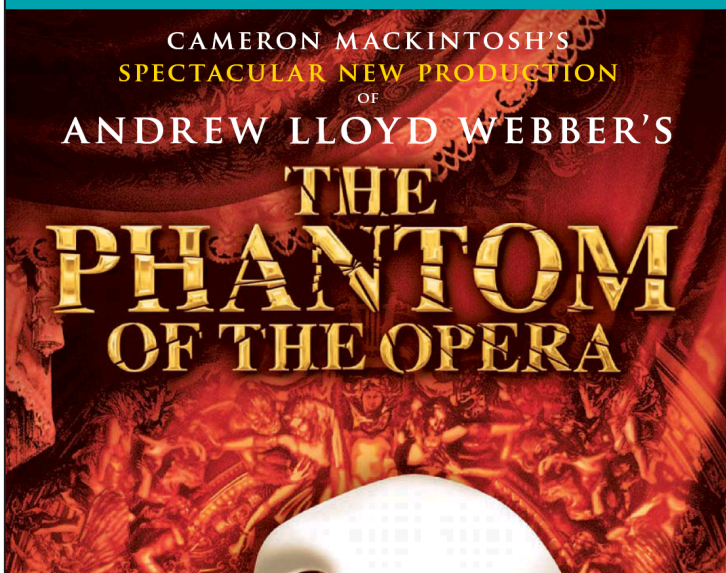
Maureen Minehan

It's clearly not prime beach time in the photographs in "At Water's Edge," Maureen Minehan's show at Multiple Exposures Gallery. Perhaps these evocatively bleached-out images were made at daybreak or twilight, before or after the crush. Only a few people are visible, and just in some of the pictures. But crowds are expected, as can be seen from the inanimate objects in "Trash Line" and "Anticipation."

The latter features a procession of umbrellas that stand in for the humans who will later use them. The red canopies also offer a vivid contrast to the photos' tans, whites and barely-there blues. In mysterious pictures such as "Topless," in which a pier fades into the mist, the seaside seems a place where civilization might simply evaporate. Only the umbrellas and trash cans, with their defiant primary colors, declare that humanity won't be absorbed back into the ocean.

Maureen Minehan: At Water's Edge On view through July 31 at Multiple Exposures Gallery, Torpedo Factory, 105 N. Union St., Alexandria. 703-683-2205. multipleexposuresgallery.com. style@washpost.com

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