

IN THE GALLERIES

'Poor art': Minimalist, but rich in its impact

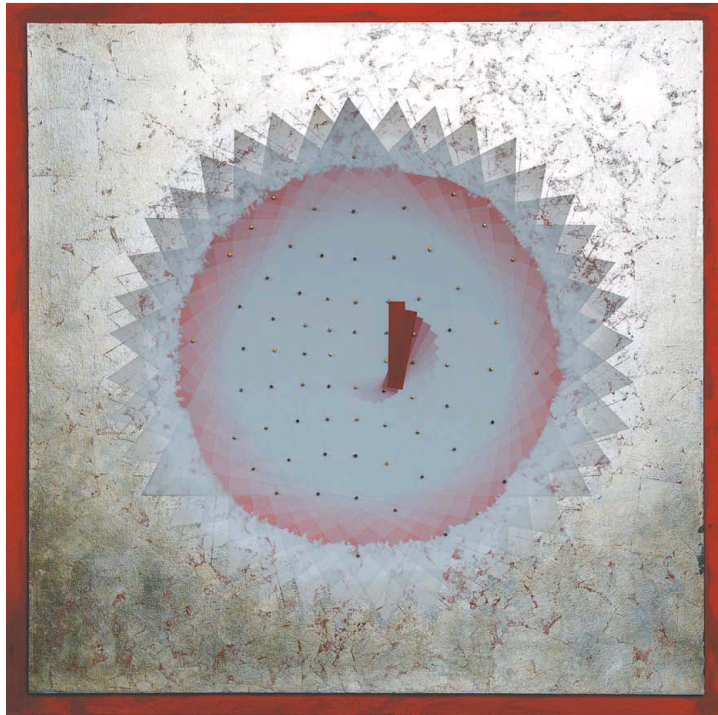
BY MARK JENKINS

In the 1960s, while minimalism was draining the last bits of romanticism from American art, the home of the Renaissance experienced a kindred movement: "Arte Povera" ("poor art"). The three artists in Hillyer Art Space's "Marco Bagnoli, Domenico Bianchi, Remo Salvadori: From the Olnick Spanu Collection" are from the generation that followed Arte Povera, according to the gallery notes. Yet pieces such as Salvadori's "Continuo Infinito Presente" share the earlier artists' interest in simplicity, physicality and industrial materials: It's simply a circle of heavy steel cable, suggesting both a construction project and an enso, the swoop of black ink that represents enlightenment in Zen calligraphy.

The other works are not quite so plain, and some even include pretty touches: There's gold leaf in Salvadori's rendering of what appear to be orbiting half planets, and Bagnoli's minimalist sculpture places a heartlike, red-glass form at the center of a steel cage atop an alabaster column.

Such gestures are rare and generally discreet. There are calligraphic strokes in one of Bianchi's pieces, but they're ivory-on-ivory impressions in a wax circle atop a field of black squares. Orderly arrangements of rectangles feature in several pieces, whether they're a series of Bianchi's abstract watercolors or Salvadori's array of punched and bent tin squares. This work is starkly philosophical, but it keeps one foot planted in the metal foundry.

Marco Bagnoli, Domenico Bianchi, Remo Salvadori: From the Olnick Spanu Collection On view through May 28 at Hillyer Art Space, 9 Hillyer Ct. NW. 202-338-0325. hillyerartspace.org.



MARCO BAGNOLI/HILLYER ART SPACE

Joan Belmar

Inspired by politics and cartography, Joan Belmar has often devised pieces in which images are partly hidden by ribbons or rounds of Mylar. There are just a few such constructions in "Cambalache," the Chile-bred local artist's show at Addison/Ripley Fine Art. Most of the works are mixed-media paintings that layer circles, grids, seemingly rocky expanses and place names. The dominant tones of these moon- or planet-scapes are black and gray, sometimes set off by one brighter hue, usually red or blue.

"Cambalache" ("barter") is the title of a 1930s tango composed for a film that condemned political corruption in Argentina. The political import of Belmar's recent work is not blatant, but

he's clearly pondering the climate in his adopted hometown. The names that punctuate these maplike pictures are not those of distant worlds: They identify cities and towns in the region that runs from Pennsylvania to Virginia.

Affixed directly to the walls, the many small globes of "Cambalache: Twenty States" orbit a larger semicircle. This is the most flamboyant piece in a show notable for its subtlety. Using little color and only occasionally venturing into 3-D, Belmar relies on a strong graphic sense to craft some of the strongest work he's shown in Washington.

Joan Belmar: Cambalache On view through May 27 at Addison/Ripley Fine Art, 1670 Wisconsin Ave. NW. 202-338-5180. addisonripleyfineart.com.

Marco Bagnoli, "Aleph (Keplero Inciso)," 1978-1999, mecca and mixed media on wood with plexiglass case, on view through May 28 at Hillyer Art Space.

Matthew Mann

Indoor and outdoor are juxtaposed in Matthew Mann's "Luxury Trouble," but just as important is the shifting balance between representation and abstraction. The paintings in the D.C. artist's show at Studio 1469 depict domestic interiors with various degrees of precision. Sometimes, bits of interior design resemble 20th-century art more than any object available at an upscale furnishings shop. In other pictures, chairs, clocks and a hat rack are arrayed in front of cross-hatched patterns that are just color and line, without any suggestion of a real-world location.

Mann is something of a surrealist, so the clocks may allude to Salvador Dali. Other historical references are unambiguous: Several paintings reproduce posters from early '80s D.C. and Boston hard-core punk shows.

The artist demonstrates his skills as a realist in canvases such as "Broken Windows," in which the view of trees outside is slightly blurred by glass but crisper where the panes are partly missing. "The Aesthete Escaped" is nearly all realistic, save for such touches as a flower arrangement of blobby expressionist brushstrokes. The picture's punchline is a trap door in the floor that appears to lead not to a basement, but to open sky. By pitting reality against whimsy, Mann always leaves himself a way out.

Matthew Mann: Luxury Trouble On view through May 28 at Studio 1469, 1469 Harvard St. NW, rear. 202-518-0804. studio1469.com.

Jeanne Garant

Executed primarily in black and gray, the paintings in Jeanne Garant's "275 Stripes" are almost austere. Yet there are glimmers of sensuousness in the Touchstone Gallery show, whether in the infrequent bright colors — a gold bar, a red line — or the textures within the muted, monochromatic blocks. Another low-key element is the translucent wax that partly covers some of the pictures, offering both a smooth sheen

and ragged drips.

Garant's work shows the apparent influence of Barnett Newman, who called his thin vertical lines "zips" rather than stripes. Both artists take a geometric approach yet sometimes punctuate the rational forms with a freehand band of color, as in "Recto/ Verso." The Arlington artist ventures further with "A Bit of Curry," a study in wavy lines whose only hard edges are the borders of the canvas. Most effective, though, are the pictures that maintain a tension between precision and intuition. Garant's stripes can either hold a field together or slash it apart.

Jeanne Garant: 275 Stripes: Oil & Cold Wax Paintings On view through May 28 at Touchstone Gallery, 901 New York Ave. NW. 202-347-2787. touchstonegallery.com.

Gordana Gerskovic

What color photographer wouldn't want to shoot in a country where people celebrate one holiday by throwing powdered pigments at one another? There seem to be traces of that festival, Holi, in "Red, Yellow & Blue," a triptych in "India Upclose." Gordana Gerskovic's Foundry Gallery show. But it's impossible to be certain, since the Zagreb-born local artist uses a macro lens to zoom into the details. She contemplates surfaces intimately to hint at their depths.

As in previous work, Gerskovic seeks the weathered and worn: rusted metal, aged stone, walls with traces of almost-lost words and embellishments. Some titles indicate the locations, such as temples of Shiva or Hanuman. Others invoke such Hindu concepts as "Pitta (Fire)" — an apparently charred exterior — or "Shanti" (peace). Yet the visual results aren't less a tour of India than of the photographer's vision. Gerskovic makes the close-up a window to the universal.

Gordana Gerskovic: India Upclose On view through May 28 at Foundry Gallery, 2118 Eighth St. NW. 202-232-0203. foundrygallery.org. style@washpost.com

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