Conjuring images from as vast as the ocean to the cellular level

BY MARK JENKINS

Although Eve Stockton’s pictures are unusually large for woodcut prints, their scale suits her subjects, which include sea, sky and sun. “Origin Stories,” the Alexandria artist’s show at McLean Project for the Arts, presents about 40 pictures among them variations on such archetypes as “Waves” or “Clouds,” hewn accurately in black with metallic silver ink. The prints often feature repeated patterns and a powerful center of gravity. Metallic silver ink evokes energy and light, frequently contrasting rich oceanic or atmospheric blues.

Some of the prints have a clear vantage point. The “Woodland Landscape” series gaze up through the trees, representing that perspective so strongly that viewers may find themselves caught by the scene. Other outlooks are more ambiguous, suggesting both macro and micro views. The range of vistas underscores the show’s title. Stockton’s seascapes could depict today’s oceans or the primordial song that preceded them; her “Blossom” series portray flowers, but the buds also resemble cells.

Stockton regularly exhibits new prints at Long View Gallery, but this selection includes some older ones, as well as a few sculptures. Among the latter are stone pieces whose streamlined curves are akin to the woodcuts’ simplified ripples. The installation, which evokes as well as a floor sculpture, is surrounded by stones from a Nova Scotia beach. Stockton used to be an architect, a background implied by both this structure and her largest prints, each of them a whole environment. Whether working in one or three dimensions, Stockton evokes a strong sense of place.

The miniature cosmos created by Kyujin Lee, whose “Replica and Rehearsal” is also at the McLean center, draws from fairy tales and puppet shows. The Seoul-born D.C. artist is a skilled realist, but her blue-dyed paintings begin as abstract gestures. These are extrapolated into figurative scenarios that include toy, mermaid and Pinocchio. If Lee’s pictures suggest the logic of dreams, so does the process by which she generates them.

Art Is Not Optional

The centerpiece of “Amarist” is a full-size rendering of a fearless human figure who reappears in gold leaf, reflecting blanket and knapsack behind a barbed-wire fence. The installation, which fills most of the smallest gallery at Lika, at Millер, is stark and grim. Yet there’s some dark humor elsewhere in this show of work by Amarist, the collective name for the Barcelona duo of Aran Llanos and Clara Canas. Those gold blankets, provided to people who cross the Mediterranean to Europe, are a motif in recent art about personal migration from Africa and the Middle East. Amarist also addresses the politics of immigration on this side of the Atlantic. On one wall are 30 pieces of gold-painted barbed wire, each different but all enclosed in identical clear plastic.
GALLERIES FROM E4

Galleries with the slogan “Make America Safe Again.” Near this fans-commercial display are a lone gold bullet nestled in a cast-concrete pillow and bomb-shaped light that appears to have smashed through a steel-and-concrete enclosure with the force of a bunker-blasting warhead. Bombs and barbed wire recur in Amaranth’s art, as does gold. Loomis and Campo fabricate functional and decorative objects, including razor-wire jewelry intended torender the fencing “a symbol of respect, tolerance and human dignity” according to their statement. Aesthetically, symbols of violence and oppression do not automatically advance tolerance, of course. Some consumers of such imagery simply find it cool. Few viewers, though, could interpret the show’s major piece. Its juxtaposition of humor and inhumanity is powerful and unambiguous.

Amaranth: Welcome Through March 1 at Stable St. Hyber, 23 St. Hyber, NW.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: “One Bullet,” a cast-concrete pillow and bomb-shaped light by the artist duo known as Amaranth. Olivia Tripp Morrow’s “Uncommon Goods” work with everyday stuff, making things that intentionally retain much of the material’s ordinariness. Olivia Tripp Morrow turns frayed women’s underwear into wall sculptures; the one that most alters the garment treats part of the suspended fabric. Nicole Salmaso adds strings dangling from trees, but here in pages of Artforum magazine, called so they register simply as black and white columns. The forms in Sarah Irving’s hand-painted cyanotypes are derived from her daughter’s toys, which yield house-like shapes in shades of blue and tan. All three women are working on customarily notions of female roles, whether as sex objects, marginalized artists or wives and mothers.

Uncommon Goods Through March 1 at Willow Street Gallery, 6525 Willow St. NW.

art@washpost.com