

ARTSDESK

At Hillyer Art Space, All Photographs Are a Stage

Posted by **Louis Jacobson** on November 20, 2015 at 10:00 am



The three photographers currently on view at Hillyer Art Space are notable for their deliberate images, which doesn't leave a lot of room for spontaneity.

Marisa S. White's surrealistic, manipulated images are sometimes refreshing, such as one in which a woman in a white dress lunges forward as a blood-red scarf over her head blows freely backward, as if she was standing on the prow of a ship (top). More often, though, they're tedious—pretentious-looking figures haunting forest settings, sometimes hovering in the air, sometimes wrapped up in a hollow tree as if it were a cloak.



The images by **Leah Appel**, meanwhile, are dreamlike in a different way—rougher, having been made with the famously imprecise Holga camera. Appel photographs her home bases of New York City and D.C., often using multiple exposures to make skewed portrayals of building facades.

Appel's work (second from bottom) is most intriguing when she harnesses the imperfections of the Holga, as in an image in which statues of saints are highlighted by heavenly (and hellish) flares of light; an image of the U.S. Capitol highlighted by oddly satisfying magenta highlights; and an image of a Coney Island sugar stand with a flare the color of cotton candy.

The third exhibit, curated by **Susana Raab**, collects staged photography from a wide variety of Ibero-American countries. Some examples are a bit over the top, such as **Adriana Duque's** sumptuously staged portrait of a child (bottom), while others are clever, such as **Garcia de Marina's** cheeky portrayal of an industrial-styled compass as a pirouetting ballet dancer.



A couple of Raab's selections, however, are undeniably powerful.

Hector Rene offers a bold reinterpretation of **Michelangelo's** "Creation of Adam," this time with the hand on the right (God's in the Sistine Chapel original) holding a hand grenade; in this version, the viewer appreciates the distance between the outstretched fingers.

Fred Ramos, meanwhile, photographs carefully arranged articles of clothing discovered in the unmarked graves of missing children (second from top). Stand back a few steps and the image could pass for a fashion ad in a trendy magazine. Look closely, though, and the message turns sharply poignant.

Through Nov. 28 at Hillyer Art Space, 9 Hillyer Ct., N.W. Mon 12-5 p.m., Tue-Fri 12-6 p.m., Sat 12-5 p.m. (202) 338-0325.



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