

Beyond the typical in domestic design

BY MARK JENKINS

Every work exhibited in “Interior World: Contemporary Furniture” is technically a home furnishing, but the seven-artist Popcorn Gallery show adopts a poetic sense of the word “interior.” From unsittable chairs to a screen that’s politically charged as well as decorative, this furniture is designed as much for the brain as the body.

The most discomfiting entries are Joel D’Orazio’s chairs, all in black and bristling with zip ties or studded with digital splitters. Equally provocative, in a quieter way, is a Japanese screen to whose depiction of childhood innocence Ruth Lozner has added falling bombs, thus commemorating the devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Also by Lozner is the quietly haunting “Night House,” a frame structure adorned with starlike white spatters and featuring a sort of infinity pool made of blue glass.

Megan Lewis’s wall pieces can be seen as political, but their message is upbeat and proudly funny. On shaped wooden

panels, she paints the faces of Black people with elaborate hairdos. But where Afros or hip-top fades are outlined, the artist places mirrors, so the unconventional pieces can serve an orthodox domestic purpose.

Also potentially functional, if far from mundane, are Cristian Wicha’s acrobatic blond-wood lounge chair; Alex Kasten’s partly painted wooden wall sculptures, nearly abstract but suggesting masked faces; Jordan Hamlett Sanders’s eccentric yet usable oak-and-steel display shelves; and Chris Shea’s swooping candelabras, forged of steel that’s gnarled like tree trunks.

Shea’s most striking piece, a collaboration with ceramist Sarah Nikitopoulos, is a “Wasp Waist Table” made with an equal measure of skill and humor. The piece’s top is covered with hivelike ceramic tiles and balanced above an impossibly tiny midriff on stinger-like legs. Part human, part insect and part furniture, the table has a lot on its mind.

What Sophia McCrocklin

terms “The Understory” is the ground level of Dumbarton Oaks Park, alive with some of her favorite things: ferns. The artist’s show at the Stone Tower Gallery consists mostly of blotted-line pen-and-ink drawings of ferns, one of the oldest surviving forms of vegetation. The artist’s drawings are charming, but upstaged by two large, detailed 3-D models of ferns, made from Dacron, wire and paint. At 10 times its actual size, the humble Ebony Spleenwort verges on the majestic.

Interior World: Contemporary Furniture and Sophia McCrocklin: The Understory Through March 21 at the Popcorn and Stone Tower galleries, Glen Echo Park, 7300 MacArthur Blvd., Glen Echo.

New. Now.

Every year, Hamiltonian Artists introduces its latest crop of fellows under the rubric “New. Now.” This year the group’s building is temporarily unavailable, so the exhibition is at Culturehouse. The relocation actually suits the art, much of which contemplates specific places or the character of public spaces.

Jason Bulluck, whose influences include Buddhism, transforms ordinary roadside sites by introducing a large cast-plastic “action figure.” The towering statue is on display, as are photos of the statue on location at night. Stephanie Garon’s sculptures are abstract, but no less imposing. “Prey” dangles and impales oak-tree chunks on a black steel frame, suggesting technology’s role in subjugating nature.

Joey Enriquez combines the natural and the personal by making prints with clay found along the Potomac River, but drawing on pictures from his grandmother’s photo album. Lionel Frazier White III also uses old photos, which he collages



STONE TOWER GALLERY/GLEN ECHO PARK PARTNERSHIP FOR ARTS AND CULTURE

Sensitive Fern” by Sophia McCrocklin features one of the oldest surviving forms of vegetation and a favored subject of the artist.

and partly over-paints to connote disregard for African American labor and history. Maria Luz Bravo’s muted-color photos of suburbia focus on barriers, both concrete and intangible, and sometimes capture architectural details in shards of reflective material. By fracturing commonplace landscapes, she throws them into high relief.

New. Now. Through March 21 at Culturehouse, 700 Delaware Ave. SW.

Marta Lola Staudinger

Among the elements of Marta Lola Staudinger’s show at Homme DC are a silky slip, a piece of canvas and lengths of copper pipe. But “Currency? Material, Radiator: A

Retrospective” isn’t simply an exercise in arranging — and photographing — found objects. Staudinger uses these items to engage in wordplay, ponder the role of the artist and pen a fragmentary autobiography.

Admittedly, this is not obvious from the show itself, which consists mostly of fabric that’s hanging or draped — including on, yes, a radiator — alongside photos and videos of similar displays. Staudinger, who runs Brookland’s Latela Curatorial, explains the artistic and personal significance of her compositions in an audio guide on her website.

The commentary, which draws on several Romance languages, discusses various meanings of “radiate,” considers how things and words are deemed feminine

or masculine, and reveals her attraction to filmy clothing (“how I adorn myself”) and metal tubing (she’s “the daughter of a plumber”). For visitors with Staudinger’s voice in their head, this array of everyday stuff may prove surprisingly intimate.

Marta Lola Staudinger: Currency? Material, Radiator: A Retrospective Through March 27 at Homme DC, 52 O St. NW. Open by appointment; email amirbrowder@gmail.com.

John Borden Evans

To judge by the slices of life depicted in “Day and Night,” John Borden Evans’s show at Addison/Ripley Fine Art, the artist has found an ideal pandemic-era refuge. His gentle landscapes depict fields, sheltering forests and neighbors who are mostly cows, fireflies and the occasional dog. But Evans didn’t flee recently to this bucolic site near Charlottesville; he has lived and painted there for 40 years.

Although Evans’s pictures are grounded in daily actuality, they’re not altogether realistic. The colors can be fanciful, notably in renderings of bright-blue cows and night scenes whose reds are too hot to have been elicited by moonlight.

The artist also calls attention to his presence by mottling the pigment and scratching into it. Those fireflies are concentric near-circles, reminiscent of Van Gogh and both painted and carved into the darkness. In “Holy Manna,” the incised forms are even less literal: They’re the names of Borden’s children, grandchildren and fellow choir members, all of whom live nearby. The neighborhood isn’t quite so uncrowded as these paintings make it appear.

John Borden Evans: Day and Night Through March 27 at Addison/Ripley Fine Art, 1670 Wisconsin Ave. NW. Open by appointment.

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