

In the galleries: An exhibition that draws attention to overlooked issues

By **Mark Jenkins**

August 23

The seven artists and two projects featured in Greater Reston Arts Center’s “Overlooked” may or may not be neglected, but that’s not the meaning of the show’s title. Rather, the word refers to ignored or discounted issues the artworks address. Although many of the participants begin with personal concerns, they intend “to give voice to those who may not have opportunities to speak,” according to the exhibition catalogue.



Julie Wolfe's "Seeing Again," on view at the Greater Reston Arts Center. (Julie Wolfe)

Among the most intimate entries is a series of photographic nude self-portraits by Matt Storm, a transgender man. All are conventional prints except for one, which is printed on fabric draped on an eccentrically shaped hanging frame. Yanking the picture off the wall expands its literal and metaphorical dimensions.

Julie Wolfe offers three dozen photo-derived prints of human eyes; the precise black-and-white renderings are splashed with various shades of loose, drippy pigment. The repeated (although not identical) eyes represent people’s fundamental similarity, while the colors suggest individuality.

Identity is depicted less specifically in Lorenzo Cardim’s wood sculptures, which contrast raw wood with such deftly carved elements as a hand (in a piece titled “Limp Wrist”) and a wedge painted with red nail polish and gold leaf. Cardim’s concern is mainstream society’s perception of members of gay and other subcultures.

Four artists, including Leigh Davis and Helina Metaferia, contribute videos. The more direct ones are Leila Abdelrazaq's hand-drawn account of the "briny grief" of losing a child and Larry W. Cook's urgent portrait, illuminated by a burning flare.

The show's collective creations are a book of drawings and text by 30 women, described by publisher Homie House Press as "a collection of scars," and Red Sand Project's small bags of sand, designed to spotlight human trafficking. The collaborators in the Red Sand Project are gallery visitors themselves, who are encouraged to fill sidewalk rifts with the sand and document the result on social media. "Falling between the cracks," of course, is another way of saying overlooked.

***Overlooked** Through Aug. 31 at the Greater Reston Arts Center, 12001 Market St., Reston.*

Kassay & Harkin

Because contemporary "starchitects" design museums that upstage their contents, it's only fair for artists to trespass on architecture's turf by making pieces that are essentially places. Such public spaces can be keyed to the actions of their inhabitants, as is demonstrated by Jacob Kassay's "X," at Von Ammon Co.

Aloofly minimalist yet interactive, the New York artist's "X" comprises 10 near-identical canvases, electroplated all over with mirror-like silver, and the track lighting above. The latter is controlled by a sensor that reacts to a low-tech catalyst: a burning candle. When the gallery is nearly still, the flame is steady. But when visitors move, the resulting air currents make it flicker, causing the illumination to stutter and the paintings to flash. The bigger the crowd, the wilder the light show.

"X" may refer to the Roman numeral for the number of electroplated rectangles, each placed at an angle to the structural column to which it's attached. (The arrangement is regular and off-kilter at the same time.) The title might also indicate an unseen element in the installation's feedback loop: air itself, or the people who disrupt it. Kassay defines the gallery's space, but he wants that definition to be as transient as a candle's glimmer.

By coating canvases with silver, Kassay invokes analog photography, a concern of Patrick Harkin as well. The Richmond artist's Hamiltonian

Gallery show, “Harvester’s Dilemma,” also plays with light, interactivity and silvered surfaces.

For this show, the gallery is nearly dark, illuminated mostly by a screen that displays white-on-black video and two industrial lights. Motorized winches propel the caged bulbs into and out of oil drums, a journey accompanied by buzzing, throbbing noises. These clash with burbling nature sounds from the photographically reversed video, in which an iguana navigates a bamboo stalk.

Some of these motifs are familiar from Harkin’s previous Hamiltonian show, whose ecological message was more explicit. What’s new is Harkin’s technique of printing high-contrast images on fabric embedded with microcrystal lenses. The resulting pictures are virtually unreadable by the naked eye, but reveal themselves when photographed with a flash. A camera is necessary to discern the work, but then nearly everybody carries one these days.

According to a gallery note, Harkin has “a contentious relationship with photography” and his goal is to challenge the viewer’s casual acceptance of photographic imagery. But there’s not much to see here without a flash-enabled camera. The device is both Harkin’s nemesis and his ally.

Jacob Kassay: X Through Aug. 31 at Von Ammon Co., 3330 Cady’s Alley NW. ***Patrick Harkin: Harvester’s Dilemma*** Through Sept. 14 at Hamiltonian Gallery, 1353 U St. NW.

Fussner & Kojzar

Light and shadow combine with words in Emily Fussner’s show at IA&A at Hillyer, “In Light of —.” The Northern Virginia artist inscribes verse onto sheets of gray acrylic, which are mounted to the wall at an angle so the words are cast as legible reflections onto the wall. Also included are an abstract design cut into pink plastic and handmade books of photographs of shadow patterns. Fussner uses vestiges of light, whether active at the instant or immobile in a finished picture, as visualizations of time and change.

Also at IA&A, Chris Kojzar explores a different sort of moment. Last year, the Baltimore artist documented himself while drawing himself at the Oculus, the train station and shopping mall at Manhattan’s reconfigured

World Trade Center. He attracted the attention of security personnel, an encounter he analyzes in “Plainclothes Agenda.”

The show includes drawings, video (visible in an old scenic-overlook observation viewer) and an account of the Oculus incident presented as a scrolling text, complete with footnotes. Kojzar muses on being a “contemporary Black flaneur,” borrowing a term once used by arty Parisian dandies. What seems most up to date about his work, though, is its engagement with post-9/11 paranoia.

Emily Fussner: In Light of — and Chris Kojzar: Plainclothes Agenda Through Sept. 1 at [IA&A at Hillyer](#), 9 Hillyer Ct. NW.