

In the galleries: Delicate works show concern about the footprints we leave on our planet

By Mark Jenkins

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Yuriko Yamaguchi's sculptures have gotten more complex and technological, but their origins in nature remain evident. In fact, many of the artworks in "Coexist," the Northern Virginia artist's show at Addison/Ripley Fine Art, incorporate sticks and branches found in local woods. These form the basis, whether actual or conceptual, for airy 3-D collages of various elements, notably forms made of paper pulp or hand-cast resin. Suspended on lengths of metal wire, the many small parts cast intricate shadows, sometimes heightened by illumination from embedded LEDs. The assemblages suggest nests, branches or spiderwebs glimpsed through enchanted light.

The title piece, made for this show, is an oblong cloud mainly in deep blue, set off by orange details. The sculpture intentionally evokes the ocean, with a boat-like shape near its center, but it also represents what the artist's statement calls "the progression of peace making." Another 2021 work, rendered in gentle white and ivory tones, is titled "Coming Together." Yamaguchi is suggesting that the harmony and balance she seeks in her work would also be worthy goals for human society.

The largest work, 2014's imposing "Energy #2," is a wall-filling honeycomb of resin cells, most of them red. The sculpture's focus on its core, accented by clustered black-resin forms and light from a centrally positioned LED, is uncharacteristic of the Japan-born artist. More typical are works that retain the random twists and eccentric contours of objects discovered on a forest path. Whether working with found or manufactured materials, Yamaguchi emulates nature even as she transforms it.

Yuriko Yamaguchi: Coexist Through Dec. 4 at [Addison/Ripley Fine Art](#), 1670 Wisconsin Ave. NW.

Stephen Benedicto

Steel, concrete and other industrial materials dominate Stephen Benedicto's show at Homme's L Street location, but the heavy components are treated with great delicacy. The local artist uses a compass to incise tightly arrayed complementary lines into large sheets of black-painted plaster topped with glistening layers of graphite and varnish; the resulting pieces appear metallic and machine-tooled. He also sometimes secretes things within his artworks, as in the series that gives the exhibition its title, "Cypherocult."

That group consists of pieces that are smaller yet substantial, since they're made of metal-framed concrete. Inside the blocks are steel labels, each containing a string of 24 words that function as the unique keys to fractions of bitcoin. Hidden in "Ciphersex," a set of lenticular prints, are explicit photographs of the artist, camouflaged within moire patterns. "Secrets are a very D.C. thing," Benedicto said at the show's opening.

If skin is not visible in the lenticulars, it's strongly suggested by steel-framed sculptural pictures made principally of burned plastic bags. These are also topped with graphite, giving them a sheen similar to that of the etched-plaster works. Yet the singed and partly shredded plastic has an organic quality. Benedicto conceals money and sex beneath surfaces that are every bit as alluring as what they hide.

Stephen Benedicto: Cypherocult Through Dec. 4 at Homme, 2000 L St. NW. Open by appointment. stephenbenedicto.com.

Goldschmied & Chiari and Fernández

Viewers can see themselves in the work of Goldschmied & Chiari, an Italian duo, and Teresita Fernández, a New Yorker of Cuban heritage. All three create works on reflective panels, although with different purposes. Goldschmied & Chiari's "Magnifica," at Cody Gallery, centers on personal identity — the spectator's and the artists'. Fernandez's "Dark Earth," at the Maria & Alberto de la Cruz Gallery at Georgetown University, is concerned with landscape, history and ecology.

An artistic team for two decades, Sara Goldschmied and Eleonora Chiari began making "Untitled Views" in 2014 and "Untitled Portraits" in 2019. This show features six new examples of those series, which consist of photographs of billowing colored smoke transferred to mirrored glass. To peer at the pictures is to become part of them, as the observer's reflected image merges eerily with the images of pink, blue and purple clouds. Of course, the effect is deceptive, as exemplified by the term "smoke and mirrors."

The show actually takes its title from another set of works, a trio of translucent pink vases designed by the artists and made by expert glass blowers on Venice's Murano islands. The vessels' overall shapes were inspired by carnivorous pitcher plants, while their voluptuously curved lips are meant to suggest a woman's. The word "magnifica" comes from the ancient "Hymn to Isis," which Goldschmied & Chiari take as a glorification of femininity. Abstracted as they are, both the mirrored photos and the glass vases reflect female archetypes.

Fernández's show features four 2019 works from her "Dark Earth" series, chromed metal panels inscribed with horizontal lines and sketched with mountain scenes rendered in multiple media, notably chunky charcoal. To further adapt the pieces to the space, the artist has hung them on two walls while continuing their horizon lines around all four of the gallery's sides. Thick, jagged charcoal marks drawn directly on the walls connect the panels, and wispiest lines represent earth, mountains and clouds. The site-specific temporary wall drawing is titled "Charred Landscape (America)," a reference to the drawing material of charred wood, but also to larger issues.

The sculptural drawings on metal represent "the cultural histories of their physical makeup — gold, conquest, violence, agriculture — and the fluctuation of power that surrounds natural resources," says the gallery's note. As with Goldschmied & Chiari's photos, the mirror-like surface is meant to bring the viewer into the artwork. In the case of "Dark Earth," though, the effect seems accusatory: For a viewer to see his or her reflection in one of these blackened landscapes is to be implicated in its exploitation and degradation.

Goldschmied & Chiari: Magnifica Through Dec. 4 at [Cody Gallery](http://CodyGallery.com), Marymount University Ballston Center, 1000 N. Glebe Rd., Arlington.

Teresita Fernandez: Dark Earth Through Dec. 12 at [Maria & Alberto de la Cruz Gallery](http://MariaAndAlberto.com), Georgetown University, 3535 Prospect St. NW.

