

ART

BELOW: An installation view of “Ad Astra Per Aspera: Empowerment Explored Through Textiles, Collage and Print.”
RIGHT: A detail of Holly Cole’s “Vanishing Jungle” installation of multilayered curtains, part of her show “Vanishing.”



ARLINGTON ARTISTS ALLIANCE



HOLLY COLE

GALLERIES FROM E4

mountainscape, viewed from a high vantage, was drawn with pastels on a series of paper bags. All three artists combine the reclamation of found materials with well-schooled technique.

The influence of graphic novels and other forms of visual pulp fiction is widespread at Artomatic and can be seen here in the work of Camron Anderson and Jenny Kanzler. Anderson’s expressionist paintings of battered faces include the letters “XXX,” the circa-1980 insignia of D.C.’s underage punk rockers. The grayish hues of Kanzler’s tiny paintings are apt, since her subjects include confessions made partly of metal. Elegant but eerie, Kanzler’s steely treats look as if they could be baked only by someone with access to an anarchist’s cookbook.

Curators’ Selects: Artomatic 2024 Through Aug. 4 at the Athenaeum, 201 Prince St., Alexandria. nvfaa.org. 703-548-0035.

Ad Astra Per Aspera

The debut show at Alliance Gallery, the Arlington Artists Alliance’s new venue, takes its title from the Kansas state motto, which translates from Latin as “to the stars through hardship.” The slogan is meant to link all five artists in “Ad Astra Per Aspera: Empowerment Explored Through Textiles, Collage and Print,” which includes painting-stitchery hybrids by Anna Nazaretz Radjou and Nicole Tobin. But the most striking pieces address struggles of African American history.

At the center of the Christina Papanicolaou-curated show is Eleftheria Easley’s hanging grid of hundreds of printed paper squares, some of them with multilingual text. Among these are tickets, coupons, stamps, maps, game cards, nutrition labels and Beatles lyrics. Solicited on social media, the scraps constitute a sort of World Wide Web of pre-internet artifacts, evocative and nostalgic.

Photographer Pedro Ledesma III takes a much more local approach, limiting himself to Richmond. One of his pictures shows a statue in midair, presumably making a much-delayed retreat from a campaign to glorify the losing side of the Civil War.

Justyne Fischer turns more directly to Black history with mixed-media portraits of John Lewis and Angela Davis. Fischer’s most ambitious contribution is a multilevel portrayal of the 1921 massacre in Tulsa’s Greenwood District, then one of the country’s affluent Black neighborhoods. The artist hand-burned a scene of destruction onto two wooden panels and then printed a version of the same image on translucent fabric that hangs in front of the panels. As the gauzy curtain moves, a century-old infamy flutters into view.

Ad Astra Per Aspera: Empowerment Explored Through Textiles, Collage and Print Through Aug. 18 at Alliance Gallery, The Crossing Clarendon 2800 Clarendon Blvd., Arlington. arlingtonartistsalliance.org. 571-483-0652

Best regards,

The main event of Isabella Whitfield’s “Best regards,” is a field of 50 two-foot-high caution signs that nearly fill a room of the Hamiltonian Artists gallery. But just as important is a small item that’s barely visible, secluded in the back of the room and nestled near the ceiling. Both artworks are designed to perplex, and to encourage viewers to take a second look at items that initially appear ordinary.

Those signs resemble ones made of plastic and usually emblazoned with warnings that the nearby floor is wet. But Whitfield’s are fabricated from medical-grade cotton and lack any text. Rather than the customary bright yellow, they’re in a narrow range of pastel hues. While the sign-like pieces resemble things that are commonplace and functional, the smaller sculpture is mythic: Made of scrap steel, it depicts two dancing horses, one of them winged. The shiny steeds hint at an untold fable.

These objects, along with the few others in the show, are exactly made. The local artist doesn’t want any flaws in workmanship to distract from the desired effect, which is to be as familiar yet potentially deceptive as the email sign-off that provides the show’s title. Whitfield may have only the best regards for gallery visitors, but she wants to keep them guessing about her intentions.

Isabella Whitfield: Best regards, Through Aug. 10 at Hamiltonian Artists, 1353 U St. NW. hamiltonianartists.org. 202-332-1116.

Holly Cole

When depicting threatened African and Asian animals, Holly Cole is realistic but not literal. The local artist’s “Vanishing,” an Art League show of painted quilts and soft sculptures, highlights both endangered species and the qualities of textiles. Cole’s roughly life-size head of a male lion, for example, features a mane made of tufts of torn, war-surplus burlap. The technique is rough, but the effect is majestic.

Cole is a former costume designer whose career included work with the Muppets, so she knows how to give fabrics not just shape but also personality. Her sculpture of an orphaned baby elephant could hardly be more endearing. Equally charming are painted renderings of juvenile rhinos and elephants being tended by humans at a hand-rearing facility based on an actual one in Kenya.

While her sculptures of African animals are substantial, Cole’s tribute to orangutans is more ephemeral. A set of multilayered curtains depicts the great apes in a tree canopy, swinging through dangling foliage. A three-part narrative, the installation moves from a healthy forest to one in which both animals and plants have almost disappeared. Cole’s amiable style doesn’t preclude outrage and pathos.

Holly Cole: Vanishing Through Aug. 4 at the Art League, Torpedo Factory, 105 N. Union St., Alexandria. theartleague.org. 703-683-1780.

WOLF TRAP SUMMER 2024
Tickets On Sale Now!

 <p>August 1 <i>Wait Wait...Don't Tell Me!</i></p>	 <p>August 9 Lyle Lovett and his Large Band Preservation Hall Jazz Band</p>	 <p>August 15 The Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis Cécile McLorin Salvant</p>
 <p>August 16 Rodgers & Hammerstein's <i>The Sound of Music</i> Sing-A-Long</p>	 <p>August 19 + 20 Jerry Seinfeld</p>	 <p>August 24 + 25 Indigo Girls Melissa Etheridge</p>
 <p>September 5 An Evening with The Washington Ballet</p>	 <p>September 7 Julietta Venegas Ximena Sariñana</p>	 <p>September 13 Kristin Chenoweth Alan Cumming</p>

The Mountain Goats
 The New Pornographers
 Margaret Glaspy
August 4

KIDZ BOP LIVE 2024
August 10

The Concert: A Tribute to ABBA
August 11

Boyz II Men
 Bell Biv DeVoe
August 17 + 18

Andrew Bird
 Amadou & Mariam
August 21

Blues Traveler
 Big Head Todd and the Monsters
August 23

Old Crow Medicine Show
 Molly Tuttle & Golden Highway
August 30

Band of Horses
 City and Colour
September 1

Crowded House
September 3

Waxahatchee
 Snail Mail
 Tim Heidecker
September 6

Squeeze | Boy George
September 10

Jason Isbell and the 400 Unit
 Alejandro Escovedo
September 11

...and many more!

