

WU = WW Pick. Highly recommended.

By RICHARD SPEER. TO BE CONSIDERED FOR LISTINGS, submit show information—including opening and closing dates, gallery address and phone number—at least two weeks in advance to: Visual Arts, WW, 2220 NW Quimby St., Portland, OR 97210. Email: rspeer@wwweek.com.

Cynthia Lahti: Battle

On the heels of winning the 24th annual Bonnie Bronson Fellowship Award, Cynthia Lahti exhibits a suite of enigmatic and satisfying sculptural and photographic objects at PDX. In the past, Lahti's idiosyncracies have occasionally veered into preciousness, but not in these works, which are at once witty and accessible. The top two-thirds of the digital print *Bank*, for example, shows a woman's belly, pantyhose-clad groin and legs; the print's bottom third shows a woman's lips, chin and hair, but not her eyes. Like the eyeless female nudes painted by the late Pop artist Tom Wesselmann, Lahti's image is denied the advantage of a window into the soul. Unlike Wesselmann's objectifying paintings, Lahti's work is neither smug nor salacious, but very, very smart. *Through March 28. PDX Contemporary Art, 925 NW Flanders St., 222-0063.*

WU Dark Ecologies

The first thing you see when you walk into Bullseye's three-artist show, *Dark Ecologies*, is Carolyn Hopkins' beautiful and disturbing sculpture, *Cascade*. It depicts a strung-up dog with stylized entrails spilling out of its belly and looping over a tree limb. Glass beads link the dog to an eviscerated bird underneath it, which appears to leak blood into a red pool on the floor. This violent, virtuosic piece is left wide open to each viewer's interpretation. Emily Nachison's *Diver* is equally allusive, with its succession of oysters opening up to reveal crystals and geodes inside. Finally, Susan Harlan's kiln-formed glass panels are diminutive masterpieces of exquisitely nuanced textures and wave forms in blue, beige, black and orange. *Through March 28. Bullseye Projects, 300 NW 13th Ave., 227-0222.*

Hedonic Reversal

By now, the fetishization of urban decay (so-called "ruin porn") has reached the point of ubiquity, if not outright obnoxiousness. In an intriguing twist, artist Rodrigo Valenzuela has kicked the genre up into a "meta-" plane. In his suite of photographs entitled *Hedonic Reversal*, he's created fake ruins in his studio, then taken pictures of them. So he's not fetishizing authentically derelict buildings; he's critiquing the fetishization of derelict buildings, and he's doing so as an artist buttressed by the platform and aesthetic credibility afforded by a gallery show. It's a brain twister that Valenzuela leaves it to us as viewers to parse. *Through April 4. Upfor Gallery, 929 NW Flanders St., 227-5111.*

WU Kevin Kadar and Takahiko Hayashi

Froelick offers a strong pairing of shows for February. A stand-

out in Kevin Kadar's show, *Portals and Puzzles*, is the acrylic painting *Firewall*. With its flame-licked, scorched-earth landscape, it looks like the unholy love child of James Lavadour, Alex Lilly and Hieronymus Bosch. In the back galleries hang Takahiko Hayashi's impossibly intricate etchings and drawings on paper. The astonishing series of 12 pen drawings, collectively entitled *In a Swirl of Many, Many Small Circles*, shows a geometric cyclone of circles floating like snowflakes or fairy-dust. *Through March 14. Froelick Gallery, 714 NW Davis St., 222-1142.*

WU Lyric Truth: Paintings, Drawings and Embroideries by Rosemarie Beck

If you were an "important" New York painter in the late 1940s and 1950s, you dutifully pledged allegiance to Abstract Expressionism and trafficked in dollops, drizzles, smears and drips. Not so for Rosemarie Beck (1923-2003), subject of a rigorous exhibition at PSU organized by art historian Sue Taylor. In her mature work, Beck eschewed abstract statements, preferring to portray flesh-and-blood human beings. Sometimes, as in the oil painting *Two with Horse*, her depictions were frankly sensual and erotic. She also drew inspiration from the myths of Classical antiquity, a predilection that was not exactly considered forward-thinking by her contemporaries. Still, she persevered not only in the medium of painting but also in drawing and embroidery. *More information at rosemariebeckexhibit2015.blogspot.com. Through May 3. Broadway Lobby Gallery at Portland State, Lincoln Hall, 1620 SW Park Ave.*

WU Nicholas Nixon: Hospice Patients

Nicholas Nixon is best known for his series *The Brown Sisters*, for which he's photographed his wife and her three sisters every year since 1975. He's showing a different body of work at Blue Sky this month, but one that also deals with the passage of time. In *Hospice Patients*, he trains his lens on people who are dying and their caregivers, friends and family. The patients are gaunt and careworn, but it's their loved ones who seem to be having the roughest time. In the tender *Maryann, Marianne, Madelon, and Elen Brinker, Wellesley, Massachusetts*, an elderly woman lies in her bed at home, eyes closed, surrounded by onlookers. There is tacky wallpaper and kitschy furniture all around. There is a poinsettia. Three black dogs lie at the foot of the bed. It's a scene of such comfortably mundane Americana, it seems almost incidental that a human being is living out her final moments. It's to Nixon's credit that he brings us such intimate moments with such a deeply humane sense of restraint and respect. *Through March 29. Blue Sky Gallery, 122 NW 8th Ave., 225-0210.*

Rebecca Johnson: Barns

Rebecca Johnson's acrylic paintings of barns exude a quiet elegance. In the pieces *Spring Ranch, Gable Roof Barn* and *Barn on a Hill Clarke Road*, she renders the structures with a cipher-like lack of affect. The barns look forlorn, sandwiched between flat, green grass and an even flatter blue sky. They don't look so much like actual barns as they do Platonic ideals, filtered through some eerie Andrew Wyeth time warp. Heightening this ethereality is the fact that Johnson braces her paintings with wood salvaged from barns and other structures. These aren't panels you pick up from Blick Art Materials; they're relics with unique histories, which seem to bubble up into the paint above them. *Through March 28. PDX Window Project, 925 NW Flanders St., 222-0063.*

To Feel What I Am

Have social media affected our body language? That's a big question, and in the exhibition *To Feel What I Am*, curators Eileen Isagon Skyers and Iris Williamson answer it obliquely and incompletely. Mostly that's because Hap is a small space, and there are a whopping eight artists in the show. As a consequence, it feels too crowded with objects and ideas. The most successful piece visually is a short film called *Aquarium* by Chicago-based artist Tobias Zehntner. It was shot underwater in a swimming pool, with the camera upside-down. The bathers, therefore, appear to be swimming upside-down, with their legs where we expect their heads to be. This is an extremely odd effect that you have to see to really appreciate. Does it have anything to do with social media? Damned if I know, but it's certainly cool to look at. *Through March 28. Hap Gallery, 916 NW Flanders St., 444-7101.*

WU Words, Words, Words: An Exhibition of Text-based Artwork

The relationships between text and image have given artists fodder for exploration for a long, long time. That's what hieroglyphics were about, as well as illuminated manuscripts, petroglyphs and the traditions of Chinese, Japanese and Islamic calligraphy. It's also what inspires the artists displaying their work in February and March at Elizabeth Leach Gallery. Jenny Holzer's scrolling electronic messages have made her an international art star. Ditto for Ed Ruscha's enigmatic words painted in typeset fonts across mountain and desert vistas. And then there are the text-and-map sculptures of U.K.-born, Ashland-based artist Matthew Picton. Picton, who used to show at Mark Woolley Gallery and Pulliam Deffenbaugh, joins Elizabeth Leach's roster with this exhibition. *Through March 28. Elizabeth Leach Gallery, 417 NW 9th Ave., 224-0521.*

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REVIEW



MARIO GALLUCCI

PNCA'S NEW DIGS

Look closely for the schooner...

First Thursday's must-see destination for March was the brand-flippin'-new campus of Pacific Northwest College of Art, which crowns the North Park Blocks at 511 NW Broadway. Although the building's name is an unwieldy 15 syllables—the Arlene and Harold Schnitzer Center for Art and Design—the structure itself is anything but.

Portland architecture star Brad Cloepfil of Allied Works has invigorated a century-old building with an ingenious redesign. Originally a post office, then a federal building, the structure had been tackily retrofitted over passing decades with cumbersome low ceilings and floor coverings, a labyrinthine layout and the kind of fluorescent-bulbed, government-meets-corporate aesthetic that calcifies souls. Renovated and revived by Allied Works, the building centers on a 2.5-story atrium ringed by thick metal cables, which drape diagonally like ropes tying a tall ship's sails. In fact, the space as a whole feels like a cross between a schooner and a circus tent. Fitting given that anything as impractical as a fine-arts education may as well be a floating theater of the absurd sailing toward Atlantis.

Beneath the atrium and surrounding the expansive commons, artworks stand, hang and hold forth, including a handsome debut exhibition, *Gathering Autonomy: Justseeds Artists' Cooperative*, in the newly inaugurated 511 Gallery. On opening night, visitors' chatter echoed into the skylights, mingling with ambient soundscapes from video installations. Those skylights are one of Cloepfil's most bracing touches; by day they flood the newly unearthed hardwoods and marble tiles in a luminous honey bath. The overall gestalt is quite grand, if a touch drab, with a color palette tending toward Calvin Klein ecru and eggshell. Chromatically, the space would benefit from, say, a juicy stripe painting by Tim Bavington or a sculpture of Jeff Koons shiny-metal variety, although such acquisitions would have shot the project's already-spendy \$34 million budget through those fortunate skylights.

Lastly, let's face it, PNCA's new home needs a catchy nickname for its cumbersome formal moniker, something more imaginative than its address. Some are calling it the "511 Building." Hmm...nautical meets circus. How about the Commodore Ringling? RICHARD SPEER.

GO: The Arlene and Harold Schnitzer Center for Art and Design is at 511 NW Broadway, pnca.edu.

WW SMALL TABS

Willamette Week's **BAR GUIDE**

BAR GUIDE

So many bars, so little time. Our annual Bar Guide gives readers the lowdown on where to load up. We do the dirty work of exploring the city's bars, taverns, lounges, and pubs to produce a curated list of the best and most interesting places to imbibe, including our Bar of The Year.

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