

In the galleries: At annual benefit show, the world goes round

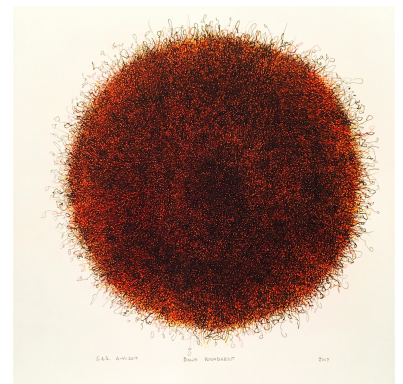
By Mark Jenkins April 20 at 6:26 PM

In the beginning was the bowl. The participants in “Alchemical Vessels,” the annual benefit show at the Joan Hisaoka Healing Arts Gallery, were issued a dish to alter or fill however they chose. But last year’s vessel was a box, and the current exhibition, the fifth, specifies not a container but a theme: “The Night’s Journey . . . the cyclical path from pain to healing.”

Perhaps because of the word “cyclical,” or just because the circle is an elegant form, most of the 115 entries are round or roundish. Nathan Loda’s “In the Twilight,” which suggests an intergalactic sky, even spins. Spencer Dormitzer offers a heavily cross-hatched orb; Mary Early a minimalist wax lozenge; and Ric Garcia a silvery Ganesha, the elephant-headed god, at the center of a cosmic wheel. Gregory Ferrand’s witty piece is an illustrated saucer that depicts a boy at its bottom, trying to dig even deeper.

There also are ovals, tubes, spirals and two variations on the cagelike sphere known as a Buckyball: Shanti Norris juxtaposes solid and empty, and Olivia Morrow wreathes band-saw blades in a tense equilibrium. Sondra Arkin’s wire construction is part Buckyball, part egg; Julie Mae Bancroft’s and Ellyn Weiss’s pieces are more nestlike. Most of the ceramic offerings are plates and bowls, but Thien Nguyen and several others have made handsome urns.

Locating the theme in all these diverse objects is a challenge, but that’s typical of shows that involve so many artists. The selection is more easily



understood not as a way to healing, but to creating. And making something beautiful is a form of renewal.

Alchemical Vessels On view through May 5 at 1632 U St. NW. 202-483-8600. smithcenter.org/arts-healing/joan-hisaoka-art-gallery.html.

Space

Although it includes what appear to be little green men, “Space” is not concerned with the outer sort of space. The four artists in this exhibition at the Korean Cultural Center ponder civic, natural and architectural domains, not cosmic ones.

Thus Daniel Kyong’s 3-D green polymer-clay figures, meant to be mutant penguins, are arrayed before a photograph of a forest. Kyong also has deployed red manta-ray-like giants in the sky over neighborhoods in Cambodia, where their sleek lines sharply contrast the dilapidated buildings.

The photos in (or of) these pieces are by Kwang Chan Song, who achieves a different sort of eeriness by shooting traditional Korean palaces and gardens through a UV filter. The resulting pictures, mostly in shades of pink and blue, are recognizable yet uncanny.

In Sun Jang does large ink drawings of Seoul scenes, which she places behind clear plastic sheets imprinted with yellow schematic renderings of the structures’ elemental lines. Eunkyung Lee makes casts of small bits of buildings, then photographs them in other sites. Jang emphasizes the totality, while Lee spotlights the detail, but all four encourage viewers to gaze at everyday sites with a fresh eye.

Space On view through April 28 at the Korean Cultural Center, 2370 Massachusetts Ave. NW. 202-939-5688. koreaculturedc.org.

Nancy Ohanian

“The Joker Is Wild,” the title of Nancy Ohanian’s show at Charles Krause/Reporting Fine Art, refers to a set of large-scale cartoons that depict

as playing cards three 2016 presidential candidates (and one interested observer). The electoral-college winner is the joker, while the ace is the president of the Russian Federation.

The gallery describes Ohanian's works as "drawings," and they're in the tradition of political commentators who employ pencil or ink. But the New Jersey artist's work is partly computer-generated and incorporates collaged photographic elements. This selection, which includes several cartoons that antedate the age of Trump, showcases several modes.

The timeliest images include ones that portray Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin in bed together, Sean Spicer at a lectern in a swamp and a patient suspended over the immense shark jaws of "Obamacare Repeal." Artistically, though, the most striking include 2013 treatments of Chinese censorship and North Korean militarism, silhouetted to simulate paper cutouts. Ohanian's wit is keen, but her work is worth seeing just for its visual inventiveness.

The Joker Is Wild: Drawings by Nancy Ohanian On view through May 2 at Charles Krause/Reporting Fine Art at Dacha Loft, 1602 Seventh St. NW, Second Floor. 202-638-3612, charleskrausefineart.com.

Natalie Cheung & Nate Lewis

To judge by their titles, change must be the subject of Natalie Cheung's cyanotypes. Each picture in her Morton Fine Art show, "Increments in Time," is named after a period of as little as one and as many as 76 hours. This is how long it took water to evaporate from the photographic paper, yielding studies in blue, black and white.

The D.C. artist has turned the process, once used for architectural blueprints, into something abstract and unpredictable. Her pictures may resemble Rorschach tests and microscopic views, but all they truly illustrate is the process by which they were made. Their poetry is an accident of chemicals and duration.

To Nate Lewis, whose "Tensions in Tapestries" also is at Morton, the African American body is a landscape to be transformed. He cuts and scrapes black-

and-white photographic portraits, removing pigment while adding patterns and flocked textures. The effect recalls African weaving and skin embellishment, but also reflects the influence of the D.C. artist's job as an intensive-care nurse, seeking to heal the most damaged. In pieces such as "Funk and Spine," the surface of a woman's body is almost entirely remade, yet sinew, bone and essence endure.

Natalie Cheung: Increments in Time and Nate Lewis: Tensions in Tapestries On view through April 26 at Morton Fine Art, 1781 Florida Ave. NW. 202-628-2787. mortonfineart.com.

Cristian Ianculescu

"Archetypes of Femininity" is the theme of Cristian Ianculescu's show at Waverly Street Gallery, but the artist individualizes his sculpted women with a variety of styles and materials. The figures may be realistic or neo-Cubist, and rendered in terra cotta and stoneware, alabaster and limestone. The Romanian-bred local artist also adds accents such as crystals — which overwhelm one piece — or a narrow length of wood, which suffices to represent a musical instrument.

Studies in pencil or crayon demonstrate Ianculescu's interest in rounded forms, as does "Portal," the only abstraction. It's an egg-shaped stone oval whose central opening disrupts meandering ribbons of natural pigment. Only some of these modestly scaled sculptures suggest the humanity of their subjects, but they all celebrate archetypal curves.

Archetypes of Femininity: New Sculpture by Cristian Ianculescu On view through May 6 at Waverly Street Gallery, 4600 East-West Hwy., Bethesda. 301-951-9441. waverlystreetgallery.com.
