

CITY

At the Hillyer Art Space, Religion Meets Alternative Reality in Three Artists' Works

Joseph Shetler, Rives Wiley, and Jackie Hoysted explore multimedia and themes of religion at the Hillyer.

ERIN DEVINE — OCT 26, 2016 1 PM



A piece from Rives Wiley's "Dinner Party Download."

For its latest exhibition, the Hillyer Arts Space has brought together three artists who, at first glance, seem to have little commonality. But each artist subtly complicates traditional materials of art or the traditions of religion, or both. In "Regarding Space," a series of drawings by **Joseph Shetler**, a heavy palimpsest of dark graphite obscures minute and graceful linework. His "post-minimal" aesthetic is somewhat influenced by a Mennonite upbringing that embraced austere simplicity and shunned materialism. The resulting drawings are both richly textural and uncomplicated.

They present in stark contrast to **Rives Wiley's** first-ever solo exhibition, "Dinner Party Download"—a selection of four large canvases and two videos that skew the normalcy of everyday activities into surreal vignettes. Their vibrant, gaudy color harmonies and distorted interiors affect a sense of anxiety hovering over the surface content. As in Wiley's "Couples Massage" or "Woman with Salad," extreme perspectives and graphic details combine with collaged images to allude to the

subject while deftly challenging the viewer's sense of two-dimensional structure. Heightening metaphor through technique, Wiley's combination of the super realistic with diffuse gestural effect collapses the visual experiences of both the painted canvas and the media screen.

Wiley takes these alternative, vivid realities and, in turn, uses the painted image to affect the appearance of her videos. Actors are positioned in brightly painted scenes; frozen in absurd acts, their movements are barely perceptible, as seen in "Saturated by a Pool Party," in which a young woman in a bikini top, skin painted Pepto-pink against a backdrop of a sickly yellow-and-green pattern, pours blue-green paint into an overflowing cup. The incongruity of her actions matches that of her uncomfortably sustained position and ridiculous facial expression. Presented in fabricated light boxes, they emphasize the still quality of a painting while indicating the viewer's more recent reliance upon mediated visual experience.

Jackie Hoysted's interactive "Vote4Pope" project also challenges illusions. Specifically those asserted by the Catholic Church. Allowing participants to dress in papal costumes replicated by the artist, Hoysted photographs them in various poses on a throne, revealing artificial constructs of power that are embodied by the papal tradition. Videos of the College of Cardinals in various ceremonies play in Hoysted's temporary photo studio, where robes, vestments, and a choice of fancy red shoes are delicately laid out as though entering a high-end boutique. While the premise of costuming as The Pope during Halloween season is playful, the Irish-born artist also challenges the unequal status of women in the Church, because any sitter must adopt a feminine papal title.

Returning the viewer to the influence of religion in Shetler's "Regarding Space," his graphite on Tyvek drawings don't easily connect to his prints of simulated, architectural blueprints of the spaces he envisions for his works. But they address the Menonite theology that asks "How can we be in the World, but not of the World?" Each of these artists struggles with that question in their own way.

Through October 30 at the Hillyer Art Space. 9 Hillyer Court NW. Free. (202) 338-0325.



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