

GALLERIES

Some artists just have their heads in the clouds

BY MARK JENKINS

Some mid-20th-century California artists distinguished themselves by emulating the glossy finishes of cars, motorcycles and surfboards. One of the heirs to that candy-colored tradition is artist, teacher and software designer Greg Braun, who lives in small-town Virginia but is devoted to custom-built 1970s motorcycles from Northern California. In "Sharpened," Braun's show at VisArts, such period mechanical design is chopped into a variety of abstract forms, from International Style architecture to the sensation of movement.

Made of wood, drywall and sometimes metal tubing, Braun's sculptures celebrate streamlining. Six floor pieces are wing-like structures, and two wall-mounted ones are sequences of fins designed to suggest both a journey through a changing landscape and the locomotion. Surfaces are painted a single bright color but with contrasting shades on edges and opposite sides, and sometimes transitions spatter from one hue to the next. Compared to real choppers and hot rods, these constructions are austere, but austere in hot red, yellow and fuchsia.

At one end of the gallery, a large-format photo of a modernist Foggy Bottom building spotlights its aerodynamic affectations. At the other, the yellow and blue "Sky Viper" surges 12 feet up; it's the closet thing to a skyscraper the artist could have built under this ceiling. The tower stands near six computer terminals on which Braun, who teaches computer-assisted design, has cached diverse inspirations for his style.

Is "Sharpened" an industrial workshop or a retail showroom? Neither, but it plays at being both. In display windows facing the street, Braun has mounted pens that appear to be launching like rockets. The artist, who did something similar with pencils recently at the Workhouse Arts Center in Lorton, clearly relishes things that are contoured, even if pointlessly, for thrust. In Braun's universe, everything is better if it at least appears ready to zoom.



EMILY PICCIRILLO/COURTESY OF ZENITH GALLERY

Greg Braun: Sharpened On view through July 5 at Gibbs Street Gallery, VisArts at Rockville, 155 Gibbs St., Rockville, Md. 301-315-8200. www.visartscenter.org.

Tom Kenyon

A car buff, Tom Kenyon has built a full-size model of a little roadster for his show at Waverly Street Gallery, "Dreams of Speed ... Supercharged!" Paper-and-plastic facsimiles of car parts are scattered through the selection, but most of the works are small collages or linoleum block prints. There's a mid-20th-century sensibility to Kenyon's work: One of the

collages includes a Marilyn Monroe-like pinup, and several pieces are printed on portions of Japanese newspapers, evoking the era when Asian-made cars were just beginning to be taken seriously. Whether depicting a full vehicle or just a spark plug, Kenyon favors clean lines and human craftsmanship. He shows no more interest in computerized cars than he does in digital prints.

Tom Kenyon: Dreams of Speed ... Supercharged! On view through July 3 at Waverly Street Gallery, 4600 East-West Hwy., Bethesda, Md. 301-951-9441. www.waverlystreetgallery.com.

"Dream of the Sea," by Emily Piccirillo is part of her "Lucent Moments" exhibition at Zenith Gallery. Piccirillo attaches her paintings to metal rods, which allows the canvases to reflect the surface behind them. The pictures depict the play of clouds, sky and unseen sun, and the hues bouncing from behind the images add another luminous element.

Emily Piccirillo

Emily Piccirillo doesn't simply paint clouds; she also floats them in space. The multipanel pictures in her "Lucent Moments," at Zenith Gallery, are arranged in grids and attached to metal rods. The steel frames hold the paintings taut and away from the wall, and vivid color fields on the back of the canvases gently reflect off the surface behind them. The pictures depict the play of clouds, sky and unseen sun, and the hues bouncing from behind the images add another luminous element.

The local artist's style is photorealistic, so the white wisps and azure backdrops are rendered exactly. Since she usually arrays variations on the same scene, the paintings recall pop art's taste for repetition. Piccirillo, however, uses neither photography nor lithography. She's part minimalist, part neoclassical realist.

Piccirillo tweaks her customary subject by silhouetting black trees in front of blue sky, or even depicting only trees, always from a gazing-heavenward perspective. She sometimes perforates patterns in the canvas or cuts a square from a picture and relocates it. Pink seeps into the lower panels in one composition, and "The Flesh We Breathe" ponders racism by substituting shades of brown for the usual deep blue and cottony white. Usually, though, the latter two colors are all she needs—at least on the front of the canvas.

Lucent Moments — The Works of Emily Piccirillo

On view through July 3 at Zenith Gallery, 1429 Iris St. NW. 202-783-2963. www.zenithgallery.com.

Caroline Adams

Clouds are Caroline Adams's principal concern as well, yet some of the most striking paintings in her "Departure" at Susan Calloway Fine Arts emphasize the textures of earth. The show includes a set of five pictures, grouped tightly together, that are all blue backdrop and billows of white and gray. Another cohesive series is painted with egg tempera and oil on small wooden panels; these emphasize land over sky and deploy the panels' grain to

evoke the roughness of rock and soil. They also highlight the looseness of the artist's brushwork, though spontaneous gestures and welcomed imperfections also are visible in large oils such as "Next Year."

Adams, a well-traveled D.C. artist who's about to move to Germany, frequently titles her work with references to time. But paintings dubbed "Bright Tomorrow" or "Yesterday's Afternoon" don't reveal an actual chronology. "Yesterday" and "tomorrow" are always in flux, which is why that five-painting suite is so expressive: It both freezes and multiplies the ideal instant of memory or anticipation.

Departure: Caroline Adams On view through July 11 at Susan Calloway Fine Arts, 1643 Wisconsin Ave. NW. 202-965-4601. www.callowayart.com.

Kiu Kavousi

Nearby and remote scenery meld in the semi-imaginary landscapes of Kiu Kavousi, a local painter who was born near the Caspian Sea. Working with thinned and layered acrylics, the artist makes all-over paintings whose subtle shifts of color suggest fields of wildflowers or mountain slopes. Often, and more realistically, he renders boats beached on sandy shores, framed by large expanses of blue above.

Writing of his childhood in northern Iran, the artist describes how the Alborz Mountains divide the country "like a giant fabric curtain." Perhaps that image is the inspiration for Kavousi's paintings on cardboard, folded horizontally to resemble a slatted blind, or on paper that's vertically and irregularly crumpled. The effect of "Blue Ridge Mountain," the show's largest piece, relies as much on its deep folds as its exuberant hues. It's a craggy landscape in itself, as well as a representation of one.

Kiu Kavousi On view through July 9 at P Street Gallery, 3235 P St. NW. 202-333-4868. www.pstreetgallery.com.

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DIASPORA

An American's artistry with silver made Mexico's industry shine

BY CELIA WREN

The silver jaguar carries six amethysts: one in each paw, and on its back and tail. The brooch is remarkable on its own merits, but as part of a new exhibition at the Mexican Cultural Institute, the jewelry also epitomizes the style of its designer, William Spratling. "Silver on Silver: William Spratling, an American in Taxco" showcases pieces that Spratling created in Taxco, in the Mexican state of Guerrero, where he lived for nearly four decades. Taxco, located in a region once rich in silver deposits, was a historic mining hub, but by 1929, when Spratling moved there, the industry had fallen on hard times. The American-born designer and entrepreneur went on to make silver pieces — including jewelry and tableware — inspired by local

Taxco, he created silver objects that reflected local life and Mexican flora and fauna, such as a silver owl with obsidian eyes and a monkey paperweight. Later, Spratling's work began to echo pre-Columbian motifs, an approach that tied in with his collection of pre-Columbian art.

The designer (who died in a car crash in 1967 at age 66) also went through a period of creating pieces that were more sophisticated and streamlined, including a silver-and-ebony Art Deco coffee set with tiny jaguars serving as lid handles, and a set of candlesticks with stems like clustered tendrils.

The roughly 150 items in the "Silver on Silver" exhibition also include original blueprints for some of Spratling's designs; letters and other documents; and never-exhibited photographs of Spratling, who also was an avia-

This year's Berlin International Film Festival, which gave increased attention to serial formats, screening such shows as "Better Call Saul" and "Bloodline" as well as series from Italy, Denmark, Sweden, Israel and Germany.

Sylvia Blume, cultural programs coordinator at the Goethe-Institut Washington, took note of two German drama series — "Blochin" and "Deutschland 83" — when she attended the Berlin festival in February. The Goethe-Institut had success with its popular 2014 screenings of the German series "In the Face of the Crime (Im Angesicht des Verbrechens)"; follow-up programming was in order.

Ultimately, "Deutschland 83" was picked up in the United States by the Sundance channel, which began airing it this month.

"Blochin" is a moody crime thriller that — judging by the pilot — is "The Wire" crossed with "The Shield." The title character, a tough, motorcycle-riding homicide detective (Jürgen Vogel), finds himself working a murder that connects to local politics and to his own criminal past. The case saps his time and energy just when he should be tending to his sick wife (Maja Schöne). As Blochin negotiates increasingly complex dealings with police colleagues — including his dashing brother-in-law (Thomas Heinze) — and various crooks, the line between right and wrong appears to vanish.

Blume said German audiences traditionally have been wary of TV story lines that arc over multi-

ple episodes. But given the success of long-form TV narratives in the United States and elsewhere, she said, "some of the German channels are trying to do something, too."

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Silver on Silver: William Spratling, an American in Taxco

Through Oct. 31 at the Mexican Cultural Institute, 2829 16th St. NW. Hours: Weekdays from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Saturdays from noon to 4 p.m. Free. www.institutofmexicocd.org.

Blochlin: The Living and the Dead

July 6, 13 and 20 at the Goethe-Institut Washington, 812 Seventh St. NW. In German with English subtitles. Tickets: \$4-\$7. 202-289-1200. www.goethe.de/washington.

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