

GALLERIES

Exploring Cuba via the works of 7 artists

BY MARK JENKINS

The names are Spanish, the weather tropical and the skin colors diverse, so the place depicted in "Q&A" must be somewhere in the Caribbean. More specifically? The Cyrillic lettering in Alejandro González's work narrows it down. Welcome to Cuba.

The seven artists in the IDB Cultural Center exhibition include a few whose work is not explicitly political. Alejandro Campins doesn't hide that he paints from photographs; here he displays one alongside the much larger canvas modeled on it. Alexandre Arrechea affixes a large architectural model to an outsize spinning top, an elegant construction that's surely too big to actually twirl.

The other five, however, are overtly concerned with control and malfeasance. Flanking the entryway is Lorena Gutiérrez's "Upperworld," which matches an empty suit to a white-collar-crime video (soundtracked with an ironic pop song). Across the darkened gallery, Fidel García's jumpy projection flashes text about "corruption and crime in society" from 1969 to 2012. In Javier Castro's video portraits, people from Havana's least-privileged neighborhoods strike poses but can't quite hold still.

The other reason the lights are dim is Humberto Díaz's "In the Spotlight," an empty spot of floor illuminated by 21 flashlights suspended from the ceiling by wires. The visually striking installation could represent many things, but the artist specifies the intended meaning: "situations in which the excess of power defines unilaterally what is or is not important."

Such situations would include the ones depicted in González's four

large black-and-white photos of official ceremonies from 1970 to 1975 — Cuba's "gray five-year period." Actually, the pictures are not of the events, but of the artist's detailed miniature models of them. The bilingual signs and icons of Marx, Lenin and Che look authentic, but the structures are clearly made of cardboard and peopled by figurines of slightly lumpy lead. For González, who wasn't born until 1974, reconstructing moments of

Communist pomp he never witnessed is a way of questioning an outmoded national myth.

Q&A With Seven Contemporary Cuban Artists On view through March 10 at the IDB Cultural Center, 1300 New York Ave. NW. 202-623-1410. qanda-cuba.com.

Timeline

To celebrate 50 years of the University of Maryland Art Gallery, "Timeline" presents artworks that are mostly from the same period. They include a confrontational 2001 photograph by Japanese feminist Ryoko Suzuki, screenprints from Larry Rivers's 1970 "Boston Massacre" series and late-'70s sports-star portraits by an Andy Warhol whose style had become shtick. But also on display are a Rembrandt engraving, 19th-century prints by Daumier and Hiroshige, and ancient ceramics from China's Han Dynasty and Korea's Silla kingdom.

Clearly, the show relies on what the gallery's supporters chose to donate to its nearly 2,300-piece collection. That makes for a selection that's far from cohesive, but includes notable pieces from multiple traditions and outlooks. One that dovetails nicely with the show's title is John Baldessari's "Time-Temperature," a short film in which a hourglass runs down while a thermometer heats up.

The Suzuki photo, of a woman's face disfigured by tight red cords, is one of several items donated in

"1972" is part of artist Alejandro González's "Re-Construction, The Gray Five-Year Period" series. González is among the seven Cuban artists whose works are on exhibit at the IDB Cultural Center through March 10.

honor of the gallery's anniversary. Among the most interesting of these are two 1960s paintings by Washington colorist Paul Reed, who died last year. Both expand the color-field vocabulary. One overlaps hard-edged blocks of misty color, suggesting a cross between Morris Louis and Josef Albers. The other is on a shaped canvas and features a center section that's mottled and glittery. Simultaneously minimal and opulent, the picture looks like one of the most up-to-date things here.

Timeline: The University of Maryland Art Gallery at 50 On view through March 11 at the Art Gallery, 1202 Parren J. Mitchell Art-Sociology Building, University of Maryland, College Park. 301-405-2763. artgallery.umd.edu.

Lillian Bayley Hoover

A century ago, architects began to banish ornamentation, and painters started to forgo the illusion of depth. Descended from both is the work of Lillian Bayley Hoover, who uses everyday buildings as the real-life basis for studies of lines and planes. The Baltimore artist's "Edges and Allowances," at Honfleur Gallery, emphasizes the abstract geometry of walls and doors, posts and downspouts.

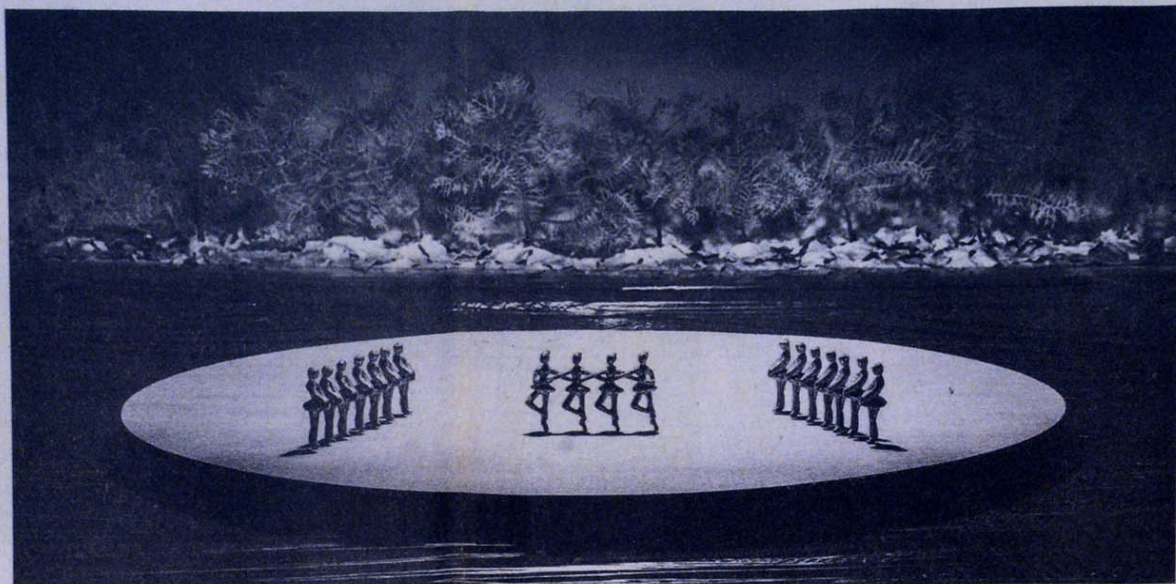
Yet Hoover is a realist, not an abstractionist. She employs perspective and modeling to simulate the third dimension of warehouses, sound barriers and supermarkets. Pipes and other skeletal metal forms appear to stand in front of the mostly featureless facades, and sometimes open sky frames the usually flat roofs.

These blue skies, and the bright green facade of "Farmer's Market," punctuate compositions that are mostly tan, brown and gray. That last hue is essential for both metal and the shadows that draw shapes such as the triangular corner of "Loading Dock." Light and dark can breach a scene, but so can Hoover, who cut "Safeway" into two unequal rectangles. The painter may be humbly delighted, as she writes, by "banal visual elements." But there's a bit of the architect in her, too, as she reveals by authoritatively constructing these vignettes.

Lillian Bayley Hoover: Edges and Allowances On view through March 11 at Honfleur Gallery, 1241 Good Hope Rd. SE. 202-365-8392. honfleurgallery.com.

Sol Hill

The title of Sol Hill's show at Vivid Solutions Gallery, 558-Mal



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