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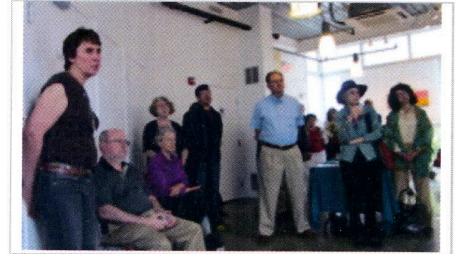
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Joan Belmar, Cameron Petke and Marie Ringwald at Neptune Gallery

May 30, 2009

Elyse Harrison, doyenne of Neptune Gallery, has, along with Cate Fraser of Fraser Gallery, consistently brought serious work by local artists to Bethesda. Neptune's show this month is particularly rewarding, combining the depth of Joan Belmar's otherworldly paintings with the zen of Cameron Pietke's ceramic bells and the architectural discipline of Marie Ringwald's constructions.

I am normally too afflicted with shpielkes (i.e. antsy) to sit comfortably through artists' talks, most of which are interchangeably vapid in any case. So I was surprised: a) to see so many civilians turn out on a Saturday afternoon in May for artists' talks, and b) to find these talks interested and informed me. The artists are all thoughtful and genuine about their work, which can be seen in the product.



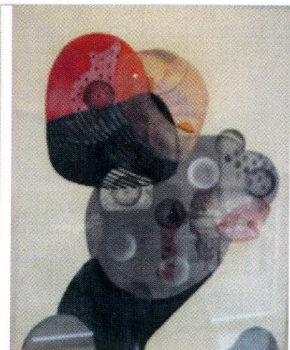
Elyse (left) and the civilians



Joan and Elyse

Joan Belmar is a friend whose work I admire greatly. Born in Chile, resident in Spain and then the US, the element of layered experience, of more in the background than is revealed on first view, of lives that have been lived in the past but never left entirely behind, is always present in his work. The image of the bicycle, which appears prominently in a number of the new paintings, seems an almost literal expression of life as a traveler among cultures.

The newest work, which includes pieces that are physically flatter than the dimensional pieces of the last several years – that is, drawn and painted on a flat surface - is stunning. They create multiple visual layers, deep with information yet breathing in space, conjuring a kind of cosmic pattern-making. I love these.



more new Belmar work

Marie Ringwald has the franchise on paintings/constructions based on architectural ideas. She uses found and embellished materials of all kinds and compresses the essentials of the built environment into each piece, ranging from the very small on up. The new pieces at Neptune, all of which were created very recently, represent a shift in direction from more monochromatic



Marie Ringwald



new Belmar work

industrial buildings to color-drenched, almost tropical places. They have a human-scaled charm and accessibility.

Cameron Petke is a new artist to me. A ceramicist and teacher, Petke's MFA project involved research into the acoustic variables of ceramic bells. He has created a series of white ceramic bells, lovely in the clarity of their form and the simple dignity of their decoration, each of which has a unique tone and pitch. They add a serene quality to the gallery.



Cameron Petke, family and bell