

ProspectHeightsPatch



Critical I

By **Melanie White** 8:00am

ARTS

With Narrative Artwork, Craft Makes a Comeback at FiveMyles

Show featuring work by 12 mostly local artists harks back to traditional values in visual art. Conceptual may take precedence over representational in contemporary art circles, but sometimes this leaves viewers with more to puzzle over than admire.

At [FiveMyles \(http://www.fivemyles.org/\)](http://www.fivemyles.org/), a gallery just a few blocks around the corner from the Brooklyn Museum but still sufficiently tucked away to remain a neighborhood secret, work by a group of emerging artists currently rewards the eye as much as the mind. “The Page Turners” opened Feb. 5 and remains on show through March 10, featuring paintings, photography and sculpture with a narrative element.

Kwame Jacl, who curated the show, said he wanted to gather work by artists – most of whom are MFA students he knows personally and who live in the area, plus a few from Harlem – that revolves around the art of storytelling.

“It’s just really good work,” he said, that reflects “attention to detail, studying your craft.”

Dominica Paige’s photographs of a female figure in epic or moody landscapes are among the most transporting pieces. Her figures – one floating in a beachside puddle at night, one peering over the edge of the Gowanus canal, another lying amid lush green plants beneath a wide white sweep of cloudy sky – could be in sinister or sublime situations, depending on the viewer’s interpretation. The staged scenes are beautifully composed, inviting contemplation and wonder. They are, quite simply, pleasant to look at – but then invite closer inspection with mysterious details, such as a sword resting on the supine woman’s thigh. In the Gowanus photograph, graffiti emblazoned across the top of a derelict building warns, “Open your eyes, girl.”

“One task of the artist today is to provide a bit of mystery – just a bit of uneasiness to make you question,” Paige said at the opening reception. The photographs are part of a series, “Posterity,” that is not yet complete.

“This series came out of my own anxiety about making work,” she said. “What do you add to the world? What do you add to the dialogue with your work? [This] is the fight we have with ourselves every day.”

Jason Mager’s triptych of boxers caught in the embrace of a fight depicts more dance than violence with its delicate lines and bleeding edges. Outsize hearts on all three canvases overstate the homoerotic theme, though, marring the work with an unsubtle element that evokes sketches in a high-school notepad.

David Shrobe’s painting of the earthquake aftermath in Haiti, “Regeneration,” creates a forceful impact with a three-dimensional element. Rubble protrudes from the painting and a chunk of the same gnarled concrete and wire lies on the floor beneath. Behind the disaster, fragments of beach, colonial buildings, skulls and limbs tangle across the canvas.

Jamal Ince’s Basquiat-style painting of a DJ at the turntables explodes in reds and blues, conjuring a lively club scene. Musa Hixon’s spherical sculpture of earth and twine, “Vision Pod,” creates a type of narrative in the room, forcing people to navigate their way around it.

“I think these days, because of selling your work and the corporate drive, technique and craft get lost, and without being traditional specifically, I just wanted this to be about good art,” Jacl said.

And good art, the kind on show at FiveMyles, means “art that communicates an idea,” he said. “Artists that are being true to themselves.”



PHOTOS (6)



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About this column: Each Friday, Melanie White will write about arts, entertainment and cultural happenings in Prospect Heights and Fort Greene. Please email her tips at melanie.caro.white@gmail.com.

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