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'Academy 2012'

By Mark Jenkins, July 27, 2012

(Selin) Balci is just one of nearly two dozen artists represented in "Academy 2012," a survey of recent graduates from major area art schools. In addition to mildew, the media include painting, sculpture, drawing, photography, installation and, of course, video. Nature is a motif of such works as Pablo Garcia Lopez's "Where the Wild Tulips Grow," a video loop in which purple ichor seeps into and then recedes from white blooms. Somewhat akin are Adam Nelson's "Alluvion," a wall sculpture whose petals suggest both natural and machined forms, and Josh Chance's intricate drawings of tendrils and birds. But such florals as Alexander Peace's "Jan Brueghel Flower Painting" are concerned more with art history than botany.



(Copyright Adam Nelson, courtesy Conner Contemporary Art) - Adam Nelson. "Alluvion," 2012; PETG plastic, screen printed imagery, steel, light .

Ryan Carr Johnson and Samuel Scharf take aim, all too literally, at bygone art trends with “Noland A.D.” and “Frankenthaler A.D.” — 1960s-style color-field paintings updated with gold paint and bullet holes. Wesley Clark’s “Four Five Six” presents two large slabs of weathered wood, painted with parts of a target. (Kenneth Noland often painted target forms.) In addition to shooting, there’s kissing, although Zachary Goldman’s “The Kissing Glass” is designed to keep lips from actually touching. Next to the device are Windex, squeegees and paper towels for neatening up any remnants of emotion.

As in previous Conner student shows, the pieces are eclectic and well-crafted, if less than startling. “Pure” abstraction is rare, graffiti remains influential and images of the suburbs are common. Such video makers as Heather Stratton and Misha Capecchi show the customary vid-art interest in ritual and repetition. Text isn’t as common as it often is in today’s visual art, but Toym Imao’s “Reversed, Expanded, Exploded — POPped!” uses words to reveal some doubt about contemporary art (or at least its biggest stars). This complex painting/installation depicts a fire-damaged Jeff Koons amid strips of paper cut from a well-known parable: Hans Christian Andersen’s “The Emperor’s New Clothes.”



(Copyright Toym Imao, courtesy Conner Contemporary Art) – Reversed, Expanded, Exploded-POPped!, 2012, Installation, Dimensions variable.