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Flashpoint: (e)merge preview

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Hotel rooms are odd spaces as temporary homes for visitors to foreign places or familiar faces seeking moments of escape.

When an art fair enters the hotel framework, as does the Capitol Skyline Hotel at the (e)merge art fair, the hotel room takes on another totally strange personality, that of a temporary art gallery.

While some exhibitors at the third annual (e)merge art fair elect to have the furniture taken out of their assigned rooms-turned-booths, other galleries challenge the artists they represent and exhibit to adopt the hotel room persona into their art.

“We spend a lot of time talking about how to negotiate the space,” said Karyn Miller, director of visual arts and communications at CulturalDC. “We’ll be acknowledging the fact that it’s a hotel room again.”

Flashpoint, the gallery space managed by CulturalDC, has been exhibiting at (e)merge since its inaugural fair in 2011. That first year, Baltimore-based artist Lisa Dillin installed a structure over the bed, inviting visitors to sit and contemplate the work from a comfortable setting. At this year’s fair, collaborators Lauren Rice and Brian Barr will also be utilizing a bed space, while pen-and-ink artist Dana Jeri Maier has specifically requested to show her work in the bathroom.

“In some ways it’s an exciting challenge for these artists to show work in these contexts,” said Miller, “It asks them to present work in a really unorthodox and

potentially awkward space and making it work.”

In her curatorial process, Miller considered ways in which to merge upcoming artists in Flashpoint’s fall exhibition schedule, with themes that are socially relevant.

Though all three artists work in different media and use different inspiration as diving points, each engages with the appropriation and remixing of found images, text, conversations and objects.

Sonya Lawyer purchases family photo albums at auction in an effort to ‘rescue’ her ‘ancestors’ from predatory purchasers who buy and divide the photographs in the album in order to re-sell individual photographs at higher prices. Sonya incorporates these photographs into her work, which is focused on the process of hand dying cotton fabric. The resulting compositions are strong, emotive works that cause the viewer’s mind to wonder in curiosity about the anonymous figures, presented in concurrence with intimate fabrics that retain a sense of human touch through texture and color. Similarly, Lauren Rice and Brian Barr collage found images and remix them in order to create new contexts for objects already in existence.

Dana Jeri Maier does not draw in a studio, but instead takes her practice into bars and coffee shops, where she appropriates overheard conversations and general surroundings into the artwork she produces while absorbing these various stimuli.

“These artists are really interested in providing new meanings and understanding that meaning is never a fixed or static thing,” explained Miller, “Meaning is something that is constantly changing and evolving.”

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Roxanne Goldberg