

WASHINGTON CITY PAPER

Time It Took for (e)merge to Get Decadent: Three Hours

Posted by [Jonathan L. Fischer](#) on Sep. 23, 2011 at 1:10 pm



Nobody wanted to look **Avery Lawrence** in the eye last night—not one of the dozen or so people crammed into the hotel room exhibiting his work, at the opening party for the [\(e\)merge art fair](#) at the Capitol Skyline Hotel.

They were looking at him, of course, but in video form, projected onto a wall, dragging pieces of timber across a field. The room smelled like wood.

Yet against the wall facing the window, there was the real-life Lawrence, helmet strapped to his head, timber strapped to his back, his feet moving on a treadmill. He stared forward, impassively, with Ken-doll composure. If it was freaking people out, they played it off by staring at anything but him. Which meant him. As video art. Inches from the real him.

This was in the hotel room booked by D.C.'s Heiner Contemporary Art, one of dozens of galleries lining the second and third floor of the chic **Morris Lapidus**-designed Capitol Skyline. There's more art filling rooms off of the first-floor lobby, and below that, in the parking garage, more galleries and unrepresented artists still. When the fair [announced its lineup in August](#), I was disappointed to see it tilt so heavily toward local names, with just a smattering of international participants. But you had to admit last night: (e)merge has come together quite slickly.

The parking-garage is the fair's more playful half: There's a hefty plot curated by street-art purveyor Art Whino, and the dominant theme therein seems to be...[pandas](#). And not far from there, fair-goers can hop on a shaking chicken or beef cut, just like one of those quarter rides you see in shopping malls. Upstairs, some galleries used their hotel rooms imaginatively, and others employed them like typical, if tiny, white cubes.

I didn't linger long in either area—the booze lines were long outside, and the band was about to go on. In front of me, a well-dressed old woman with blue hair ordered a vodka and sugar-free Red Bull.

LouLou and the Disappointer Sisters is a four-piece, assembled for the occasion, featuring the eponymous singer from **Thievery Corporation** as well as Fugazi fifth man **Jerry Busher** on drums. Often, songs began with harsh, **Tangerine Dream**-like intros before blossoming into spiky yeh-yeh grooves, with Loulou Ghelichkhani singing in French. Like Thievery Corporation, this was mood music: Weird, catchy, and in this case evoking art-world cool. I'd love to hear a recording.

I left around 10 p.m., right around when the fete was really getting started. Some folks had just [invaded the pool](#). That's all you can really ask of a Capitol Skyline party.

(e)merge runs all weekend at Capitol Skyline. There's also [a free shuttle](#) between (e)merge, But Is It Art?, and The Fridge gallery. We'll have more—from actual art critics!—all weekend on Arts Desk.

Photo by Matt Dunn