

Museums

In the galleries: Rooted in nature but not always natural



Carson Fox, "Orange Rock," 2014-15, resin, on view at Addison/Ripley Fine Art. (Carson Fox/Addison/Ripley Fine Art)

By Mark Jenkins March 6

Spiraling across a gallery-white wall, Carson Fox's "Orange Coral" is both naturalistic and denatured. Its branches, made of red-orange cast resin, resemble segments of a coral reef but function more as abstract forms than as depictions of real-world phenomena. The sculpture's beauty is of itself, not of what it represents.

That's typical of "Natural Allusions," a show at Addison/Ripley Fine Art that convenes six artists from the District and New York, plus one former Washingtonian who now lives in Berlin. Some of the participants stay closer to their models than others, but none are confined by them. Linda Cummings's watery renderings of reeds, ripples, shadows and surfaces are for real — they're photographs, after all — but emphasize light and motion over things. The delicate paintings of Jackie Battenfield, the local artist who curated the show, portray flowering branches that are clearly recognizable. But they're made with diluted acrylics on Mylar, which creates a moist, impermanent quality.

Merle Temkin's trio of "Three Sisters" are striking cactuslike silhouettes, painted in desert-twilight tones of red, purple and near-black. Julia Bloom assembles sticks, sometimes painted a unnatural red, into large, irregular lattices that are part basket, part nest. Isabel Manalo's forest scenes are impressionistic and high-contrast, as if bleached by light.

Judy Hoffman combines ceramics and oxides to craft objects that evoke minerals and mushrooms. They fit nicely with Fox's other pieces, as brightly hued as "Orange Coral" but with quartzlike structures. Like most of these works, Fox's mock rocks take nature as their guide but don't follow its directions literally.

Natural Allusions On view through March 14 at Addison/Ripley Fine Art, 1670 Wisconsin Ave. NW. 202-338-5180. www.addisonripleyfineart.com.