

AROUND TOWN

Henry Dancer solo exhibit: The French artist's watercolors, gouache, pastel and mixed media echo expressionist movements. Opening reception from 6 to 8 p.m. Friday. On view at Gallery 10, 1519 Connecticut Ave. NW, through August 26; gallery10dc.com.

Chakaia Booker: African-American feminist Chakaia Booker's five sculptures made from automobile tires are on view through Sept. 4 at the National Museum of Women in the Arts 1250 New York Ave. NW; nmwa.org.



Marc Alain's photo collage "Magritte, Dali, Brody, Hobbema, Jones" is part of Project 4's "15 Minutes," on view through Sept. 9.



ARTSCAPE

'15 Minutes': Framing fame

By Robin Tierney
Special to The Examiner

Paris Hilton, Michael Jackson, Macaulay Culkin. After endless parades of pop-star paparazzi snaps, Marc Alain's photo-collaged "Culture Icons" deliver a refreshing shock of visual cold water on an August day.

These eye-popping, surreal celebrity send-ups sprang from Alain's newfound fascination with art history, a subject that barely figured in his photo-centric study at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore.

"There are so many amazing mini-images within [Hieronymus] Bosch's 'Garden of Earthly Delights,'" the photo artist explains. He began combining elements from Bosch and Caravaggio paintings, then added Warhol to the mix. Boosting the potency of his Photo-shopped brew, Alain inserted famous faces from shots by photographers he respected.

The black-and-white collages' timelessness contrasts with the fleeting nature of fame. You can behold "Titian, [Paris] Hilton, Von Unwerth, Bacon, Hirst, Klimt," "Magritte, Dali, [Adrien] Brody, Hobbema, Jones" and "Fouquet, Avedon, [Monica] Bellucci, Botero" in 15 Minutes, which opens Friday at Project 4.

The show's five artists hold a flame to celebrity and consumerism, at once illuminating, roasting and melting the concepts' shiny veneer.

In mixed media takes on the theme, which references Warhol's famous quote, Luisa Greenfield integrates "the intimacy of paint with ubiquitous, reproducible images that operate on levels of both myth and nostalgia." The results hit the mark; thick daubs of vibrant oils evoke illusory cowboy impressions that compete with photos they largely obscure — images from John Ford's 1956 film classic, "The Searchers."

The American University Master of Fine Arts grad, who hops between D.C. and San Diego, views "the absolutist values of the Western genre," particularly the cowboy myth, as an apt metaphor for the way America's government has operated in recent years.

Too often, fame and its cousin hyperbole last much longer than 15 minutes. Fortunately, we have a month to enjoy these warped and wry alternative views.

MUSEUMS » NEW EXHIBIT

Taking in new views of Capitol history

By Robin Tierney
Special to The Examiner

Think nothing's happening at the City Museum of D.C.? Three modest but meritorious exhibits opened this month, making the landmark Carnegie Library building at Mount Vernon Square worth visiting for new looks at our city's rich but checkered past.

Presented by the Historical Society of Washington and the U.S. Capitol Historical Society, the exhibits tread ground not covered in standard history texts.

"From Freedom's Shadow: African Americans and the United States Capitol" tracks the journey of African Americans from slavery to freedom and political representation. As conveyed through period engravings, photographs and text, "freedom for some meant slavery for others. The cruel irony of this nation's founding and its 'Temple of Liberty' — the U.S. Capitol — is that both were made possible by the enslavement of African Americans."

Slave owners received payment, but the slaves were only paid for overtime, if at all. Interestingly, it was an enslaved African American, Philip Reid, who cast the Statue of Freedom mounted atop the Capitol's Dome.

An adjoining space features



CAPITOL HISTORY

Both exhibits are on view through Sept. 15

» **Venue:** The Carnegie Library, 801 K Street NW
» **Tickets:** Free
» **Information:** 202-383-1850; citymuseumdc.org



"The Apotheosis of Washington," covering nearly 5,000 square feet of the U.S. Capitol dome was completed in 1865 by painter Constantino Brumidi. Below, the Martin Luther King Jr. bust is part of the "From Freedom's Shadow" exhibit.

portraits of famous and unsung heroes who changed D.C. and the nation. There's Benjamin Banneker, 1731-1806, self-taught mathematician, astronomer and inventor, whose 1795 almanac was hailed as the best of its time. Mary Church Terrell, 1863-1954, was among the first African American women to be awarded a college degree, and the first to serve on a board of education. This D.C. notable helped found the NAACP.

The reason for the exhibit was a tour USCHS curator Felicia Bell took four years ago. "The guide failed to mention the contributions of African Americans to the Capitol," she said. Many D.C. residents shared her curiosity.

Freedom's Shadow illuminates a hidden chapter of American history: laborers, including enslaved workers who constructed our nation's iconic buildings. Bell uncovered such incidents as Daniel Brown's escape from the construction site in 1827. His owner advertised a \$50 reward for the young

slave's return.

A second exhibition commemorates the bicentennial of the birth of "the Michelangelo of the Capitol," Constantino Brumidi. Having immigrated from Italy to America at age 47, he spent his last 25 years decorating the Capitol with frescoes inspired by the gods and goddesses of ancient Rome.

At the time, anti-immigrant sentiment, ironically, strained the social fabric of the young nation. Several U.S.-born artists criticized Brumidi's appointment and his art. Perhaps that's why he signed his American Revolution fresco "C. Brumidi Artist Citizen of the U.S."

In 1865, Brumidi completed "Apotheosis of Washington." The masterwork covers 4,664 square feet of the Dome's canopy; its figures stand up to 15 feet tall so they could be identified from the Capitol floor. The visual allegory centers on George Washington's ascension to heaven — a little grandiose but intriguing.

For his final project, the frieze of American history encircling the

Rotunda, Brumidi used a monochrome palette of whites and browns to create the illusion of sculptures when viewed from the floor 60 feet below.

When curator Barbara Wolanin began working with the Capitol art program 20 years ago, the mural was painted over and sullied by decades of soot, gas lights and smoking. The dome's sky had turned charcoal gray before preservationists restored it to light yellow. Usually taken for granted, these works merit a close look. Coinciding with the debate about statehood for D.C., "Worthy of National Commemoration" displays D.C.'s nominations for the Capitol's Statuary Hall.

The hall houses statues of two notables from each state, but none from the District — yet. "Washington is the politician's town," says Pam Scott, a chairman with the Historical Society of Washington. "Yet there were as many artists, educators, musicians, and poets worthy of inclusion in Statuary Hall as people in the political arena."

15 MINUTES

On view Aug. 4 through Sept. 9

» **Venue:** Project 4, 903 U St. NW

» **Hours:** Wednesday through Friday 2 to 6 p.m., Saturday noon to 6 p.m.

» **Opening reception:** 6 to 8:30 p.m. Friday

» **Tickets:** Free

» **Information:** 202-232-4340; project4gallery.com