

ART

In the galleries: The harsh beauties of a glacial season

Also: A D.C. painter capitalizes on the city's light, remarkable cutouts and drawings inspired by the past

Review by Mark Jenkins

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"Intersection," by Fran Livaditis, one of the 14 artists featured in "Winter" at Multiple Exposures Gallery.
(Fran Livaditis)

December through February are the cruelest months in “Winter,” a 14-contributor show at Multiple Exposures Gallery juried by noted photographer Craig Sterling. More than half of the 28 pictures are in color, but that’s not always easy to discern. The dominant hues are gray and various shades of white spun by snow and ice. Even the brightest blues tend to be frigid, whether gleaming in wind-chilled skies or literally frozen in ice floes. If the overall mood is not quite desolate, most of the photos depict some form of isolation.

None of the locations are explicitly disclosed, but a few titles indicate places such as North Dakota, Yellowstone National Park, the Jersey Shore and the ever-photogenic Iceland. Often the compositions center on a single structure — a remote house or barn — or a lone tree or small, denuded grove. People are rarely glimpsed, and, when visible, they’re dwarfed by the landscape. The exception is Tom Sliter’s intimate close-up of two skaters’ feet and ankles, in which only foreshortened shadows disclose the existence of the full bodies beyond the frame.

Both Fred Zafran and Clara Kim immerse the viewer in falling snow by positioning out-of-focus flakes like spots of soft white light in front of their subjects — a vintage brick building in Zafran’s photo and a huge tree and a small human in Kim’s. Kim captures a different sort of activity with her picture of a freight train snaking through a mountainous landscape, shot as a long exposure so the train is blurred by motion. More typical, though, are such stark evocations of absolute stillness as Van Pulley’s study of trees swaddled in snow, Sandy LeBrun-Evans’s high-contrast image of a small structure framed by a rustic fence, and Maureen Minehan’s view of stakes partly downed by fierce weather.

Ice manifests as crystals in a pair of Francine B. Livaditis’s close-ups, as small bergs in a Matt Leedham seascape and as heavy icicles outside a window in an Alan Sislen photo that appears to be the only one taken from the comfort of indoors. For this show’s participants, winter is not simply a season to be observed, but a place that beckons to be entered.

Winter Through Jan. 29 at Multiple Exposures Gallery, Torpedo Factory, 105 N. Union St., Alexandria.