

June 29, 2023

Best Bets for June 29–July 5 *This week’s highlights include the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, two nights of Natalie Merchant, Alan Sislen’s photos, Ferreira tonight, and Lido Pimienta next Thursday.*

Through July 9: Alan Sislen at Multiple Exposures Gallery



Alan Sislen, “Steam at Windy Point”

Alan Sislen, a Maryland-based photographer, failed to heed the “show, don’t tell” rule when he chose the title *Amazing Aspens* for his new exhibit at Multiple Exposures Gallery. The visual merits of the quaking aspen would come across just fine without the hype. The tree that Sislen documents is anchored by a silvery, cylindrical trunk and decorated with bright yellow leaves; its unusual system of aggressively sprouting “clone” shoots, at a short distance, tends to produce sprawling splotches of gold amid the greenery of landscapes in the American West. Sislen offers a few black-and-white images, including one of bare trunks that echoes the [ghostly arboreal images](#) of fellow gallery member **Sarah Hood Salomon**. But the payoff comes with the color images, which offer enough intricate details to warrant pushing your nose right up to the glass.

An underappreciated factor in Sislen’s images is the sky, which varies from cumulus-laden clarity to a looming fog that carries a whiff of unease. (Could it be an encroaching wildfire?) One image, “Leaf Shadows,” offers a reminder that Sislen was wise to mostly park himself at a distance: In this close-up, the aspens’ leaves are plainly pocked with jarring brown spots. The far more pleasing image, “Zorro Was Here,” depicts the aspen canopy as if it had the texture of velvet.

Alan Sislen’s Amazing Aspens runs through July 9 at Multiple Exposures Gallery at the Torpedo Factory Art Center, Suite 312, 105 N. Union St., Alexandria. Daily, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. multipleexposuresgallery.com. Free. —Louis Jacobson