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Democracy Dies in Darkness

In the galleries: Korean artists capture the surreal and the sublime

Also: A multidisciplinary group explores ocean interconnections, a photographer captures the Francis Scott Key Bridge, and an artist's music career inspires his painting



Review by Mark Jenkins

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Eric Johnson

Even if it weren't the most graceful crossing between D.C. and Arlington, Va., the Francis Scott Key Bridge would be impressive simply because of its location. Stretching between two towering bluffs, the bridge crosses the Potomac near where the river transitions from wide and easygoing to rocky and wild. This dramatic siting surely is one reason Eric Johnson began photographing Key Bridge about seven years ago, perhaps looking forward to its 2023 centennial.

The black-and-white photos in Johnson's "Key Bridge," at Multiple Exposures Gallery, gaze at and from the bridge. They include close-ups and panoramas; pictures made with long exposures or narrow depth of field; and views that emphasize the transcendently natural or the dispiritingly man-made. The photographer is alert to visual and thematic contrasts: A jetliner soars above a bridge-crossing bicyclist, and arrows painted officially on the bridge's pavement vs. graffiti added illicitly to its supports.

The river flows through many of the images, but Johnson also depicts water in the air. In these shots, the bridge is often bathed in mist or rain, yielding droplets that bead softly on hard surfaces. Key Bridge is solid 100 years on, but Johnson finds moments in which it almost disappears.

Eric Johnson: Key Bridge Through Sept. 10 at Multiple Exposures Gallery, Torpedo Factory, 105 N. Union St., Alexandria. multipleexposuresgallery.com. 703-683-2205.