



cablegram

art, Dispatches, drawing, nonprofit, painting, photography, sculpture, video, Washington DC

| Dispatches #17 | New Now: Introducing the 2010 Hamiltonian Fellows

In art, Dispatches on 08/30/2010 at 9:05 am

@ Hamiltonian Gallery, Washington, DC.

(<http://cablegram.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/2-day.jpg>)

The nonprofit organization Hamiltonian

(<http://www.hamiltonianartists.org/>) offers a competitive fellowship

program in which awardees receive a modest stipend, exhibition

opportunities, mentoring support, and additional resources. The summer

exhibition of art by the 2010 fellows, all recent graduates from area schools,

presented work that varied in medium and subject yet revealed common interests in themes such

as chaos vs. order (particularly systems) and observation vs. invention, as well as an appreciation

for the artistic process in terms of both idea and media generation.



Jessica van Brakle (<http://jessicavanbrakle.com/>)'s intentionally decorative acrylic and ink

paintings depict building cranes and plants in mortal combat for compositional domination. Ryan

Hoover (<http://www.ryanhoover.org/>)'s cyanotypes and mixed-media paintings present puzzling

mappings of seemingly unrelated things, such as set of chairs around a table, a toggle switch, or a

moral argument. As investigations into art historical conventions, Joyce Y-J Lee

(<http://www.jyjlee.com/>) calls her videos "projection paintings." However, I thought the word

"constructions" seemed more apt, suggesting composites of stiff human figures "plopped" into

artificial and sterile settings.

Titled "Paperscapes" Elena Volkova (<http://www.elenavolkova.com/>)'s subtle drawings of,

literally, pieces of paper at first appear to be punned exercises in verisimilitude. But careful

consideration reveals a deeper exploration of artistic conventions, such as the tropes of “landscape,” “still life” and even “drawing.”

Perhaps because I just finished reading [The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks](http://rebeccaskloot.com/the-immortal-life/) (<http://rebeccaskloot.com/the-immortal-life/>), which chronicles the story of the woman who provided scientists with the most robust line of human cells used in the twentieth century, I was drawn to work of [Selin Balci](http://www.selinbalci.com/) (<http://www.selinbalci.com/>) whose primary medium is microbial growth. Her time-lapsed video “Portrait of Jonathon Monaghan” begins with an image of her subject created out of growth media in a petri dish, which Monaghan kept open for a short period of time in his home. Balci filmed the microbes, which could be bacteria, fungi, or other microscopic creatures that landed in the dish and aggressively consumed the original image. “Our Mutual Environment” is comprised of 90 petri dishes assembled in a grid on the wall, each of which contains small personal samples such as hair, fingernails and pocket lint garnered by attendees of the Hamiltonian’s opening reception. A few weeks later, the source materials had been obscured by colonies of microbes, often fuzzy and gray.

Balci’s work exemplifies one of my essential definitions of art, that is, art makes visible something that previously was not. In this case, the artist manifested the unique identities of her sitters as defined by a world that is largely hidden from sight.

-**N. Elizabeth Schlatter** is a curator and writing living in Richmond, VA.

Image: Selin Balci, “Portrait of Jonathon Monaghan,” 2010, video (petri dish, growth media, microbial growth), 7:15 minutes.

► [No Responses](#)

[Blog at WordPress.com.](#) Theme: [DePo Masthead](#) by [Automattic](#).

Follow

Follow “cablegram”

Powered by [WordPress.com](#)