



The Arlington Arts Center's 40th-anniversary exhibition includes Foon Sham's "Vessel," foreground, and Dane Winkler's "Far and Away," right.

FOON SHAM

1+1 equals more than 2 artistic viewpoints

Exhibition in Arlington gives new generation of artists opportunity to pick up predecessors' torch

BY MICHAEL O'SULLIVAN

In the most literal way, the Arlington Arts Center's 40th-anniversary exhibition, "CSA: Forty Years of Community-Sourced Art," looks backward and forward, as the show's introductory wall text explains. Five established artists with long-standing ties to AAC, either as exhibitors or studio residents, picked five emerging artists; works from both selector and selectee make up the show. There isn't a lot of thematic glue here, nor should there be. "CSA" is, after all, about the way regional art spaces such as AAC work, through a process of incubation and nurturing, of passing on the torch.

The works that bear the most similarity, both for their materiality and conception, are by sculptor Foon Sham and his choice, sculptor Dane Winkler.

Installed near each other on the AAC grounds, both are outdoor pieces built of wood. Winkler, a graduate student of Sham's at the University of Maryland, has made an interactive sculpture that viewers can push, like a revolving door, while Sham contributed a contemplative enclosure that viewers may enter and, if they desire, sit inside. It smells wonderful and has an oculus (a hole in the roof) open to the sky.

The artworks also evoke past and future in ways other than the artists' mentoring relationship. Sham's "Vessel" was fashioned from wood taken from a white oak that recently died on Maryland's College Park campus, giving new life to something old. Winkler's "Far and Away" also combines nostalgia and modernism, calling to mind both a barn door and the entrance to an office building.

Elsewhere throughout the show, you'll encounter themes of time, memory, childhood, old and new technology, hope for the future and a sense of honoring the past. Curated by Laura Roulet, the show expresses its themes both in its structure and in its content.

CSA CONTINUED ON 19



DANE WINKLER

Sham's work has a hole in the roof. Winkler's evokes both a barn door and an office building's entrance.

CSA FROM 18

Only rarely are the linkages between veteran and up-and-comer visible. When they are, it's pretty obvious. The often surreal figures of painter Erik Thor Sandberg's canvases, for example, are clearly echoed in sculptor Alex Podesta's sculptures — multiple self-portraits of the bearded artist in adult-size bunny costumes. Both men's work is a little funny, a little disturbing. You can see why one picked the other.

Close followers of the area's art scene won't find many surprises. Mixed-media artist Soledad Salame's "Gulf Distortions," an environmentally themed series of deliberately degraded landscapes of Louisiana, were shown three years ago at the Art Museum of the Americas. The artist's colorful plexiglass constructions, based on bar codes, were, however, a revelation (at least to me). And it's nice to see so many images at once from photographer Ken Ashton's ongoing "Megalopolis" series of decaying streetscapes from Washington to Boston. The photos aren't mere documentary; they evoke a bittersweet emotional response.

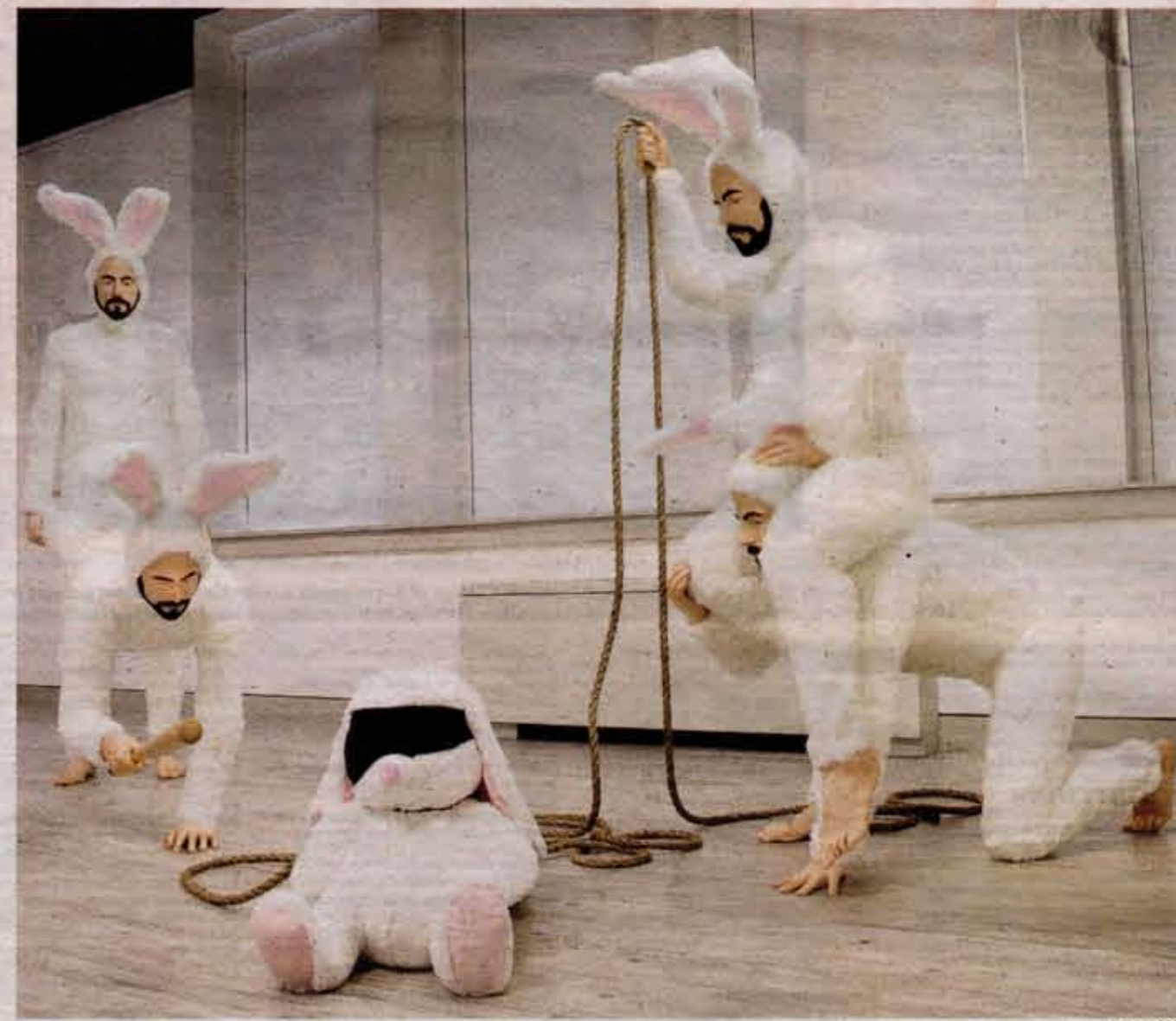
Less emotive — and more formal — are works by painter Tariq Tucker and mixed-media artist Nikki Painter, both of whom straddle the gap between painter and sculptor. Form, composition and color — along with a playful sense of three-dimensionality — delight the eye, even if they don't bring tears to it.

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CSA: FORTY YEARS

OF COMMUNITY-SOURCED ART

Through April 13 at Arlington Arts Center, 3550 Wilson Blvd., Arlington (Metro: Virginia Square). 703-248-6800. www.arlingtonartscenter.org. Open Wednesday-Friday 1 to 5 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday noon to 5 p.m. Free.



ALEX PODESTA

A little funny, a little disturbing: Alex Podesta's installation presents multiple self-portraits of the artist wearing bunny costumes.

THE STORY BEHIND THE WORK

The most challenging work in the show belongs to performance artist J.J. McCracken. Like sculptor Martha Jackson Jarvis, who shares a studio building with the younger artist, McCracken evokes a sense of agriculture with the title of her installation, "Husk."

(Jackson Jarvis's outdoor sculpture, "Markings II," is based on a winnowing building, where grain is separated from chaff.)

But McCracken's two-gallery installation, which includes what she calls an outer "specimen room" and a darkened inner "reflective space," where you can lie on real sod under a projection of fake stars, also is about the body, time and something McCracken calls "nonproductive eating."

What exactly does that mean? A bowl of chewing gum, sitting in the grass and free for the taking, should answer that question. It's the ultimate junk food. Your own nonnutritive chewing is accompanied by a soundtrack of multiple clocks whose ticking sounds like loud, incessant munching.

In the specimen room, you'll find a stack of bricks. Like much of McCracken's earlier ceramic work, the clay is unfired, with mold growing on it, the appearance of which will change over time. It's bread mold, the result of the artist's mixing Wonder Bread with the clay. The bricks, vaguely breast-shaped, are



MARTHA JACKSON JARVIS

meant to contrast healthful with unhealthy nourishment. McCracken, a former vegetarian, now occasionally eats fish but describes herself as "careful" about what she eats.

She says she doesn't want to be preachy,



J.J. MCCRACKEN

and her work is anything but. Subtly yet powerfully, the ticking of the clocks — along with "Husk's" other, quieter symbols — is meant to invite mindfulness about what goes on inside the temples of our bodies.

— Michael O'Sullivan

LEFT: Martha Jackson Jarvis's sculpture is based on a winnowing building, where grain is separated from chaff. ABOVE: In J.J. McCracken's "Husk," a stack of bricks is meant to contrast healthful with unhealthy nourishment.