

# The Washington Post

## Reviews: Conner Contemporary Art, Transformer, Hamiltonian, Irvine and Civilian

By Jessica Dawson  
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This critic has been hitting quite a few art openings lately. Here's some of what I've liked.

### *Kost and Baldwin at Conner*

Enough drag queens to fill a bus preened for the art crowd at photographer/good-time-boy Jeremy Kost's splashy opening earlier this month. Leigh Conner, owner of Conner Contemporary Art, had bused in a gaggle of New York party people -- these the very same subjects of Kost's thousand-plus Polaroids now covering the gallery's walls. In Conner's back room, Taylor Baldwin's quirky sculptures configure castoffs (plastic foam cups, plastic crates) into objects worth looking at. Baldwin's best work here? The artist-made 'zine accompanying the show. Its diary-like entries detail the history of every component of this artist's decidedly mixed media.

Taylor Baldwin transforms castoffs into quirky sculptures at Conner. (Conner Contemporary Art)



*"Snow Globe" at Transformer*

If you were hanging with the drag queens at Conner, you missed Transformer's ballet-in-a-shoebox performance, "Snow Globe." A collaboration between artists Zach Storm and Jessica Cebra and the Washington Ballet studio company, "Snow Globe" used the gallery's diminutive size to its advantage: The one-off, hour-long ballet (choreographed by Septime Webre) featured company members dancing against a backdrop of icy blue walls and cardboard mountain peaks designed by Storm and Cebra. The resulting spectacle (music by Mozart, Air and Philip Glass, among others) was a complex spin on "mixed media."

*"Call + Response" at Hamiltonian*

The sweaty masses packed last weekend's "Call + Response," a collaborative exhibition that asked 16 artists to respond to stories by 16 writers, transforming the gallery into a giant, disjointed picture book. Standouts: Magnolia Laurie's delicate architectural fantasias done in gouache and graphite (though how they connect to Wade Fletcher's opaque text is befuddling.) Another hit: artist Bryan Rojsuontikul, who memorialized TV icon Mister Rogers via minimalist icons Carl Andre (yes, you may step on Rojsuontikul's linoleum tiles) and John Baldessari (those 1960s text paintings, which Rojsuontikul riffs on). The work is a shout-out to Mike Scalise, author of a story about the Cardiganed One's indifference to death.



*Sebastian Martorana at Irvine*

Like Bernini doing Bed, Bath & Beyond, Baltimore-based Sebastian Martorana sculpts the quotidian -- bath towels, crushed-up paper balls, a jacket -- out of marble. His "Uncommissioned Memorials" exhibition at Irvine Contemporary involves intriguing reversals, such as a trio of bath towels, bolted deep in the wall, that actually hold up the metal racks they "hang" from. The heaviest one -- rumped beautifully -- weighs 140 pounds. Martorana is adept, manipulating stone into the perfect degree of nubby.

*George Jenne at Civilian*

No, you didn't just walk onto the set of a George Romero film. This is Brooklyn, N.Y., artist George Jenne's show of props for horror movies that never happened. Here, showmanship rules: Unparalleled production values meet stranger-than-fiction characters inspired by scary movies. Jenne's day job as a commercial prop designer ensures you won't soon forget the tongue wagging from that Hitler youth boy scout. Note to the nightmare-prone: Viewer discretion is advised.

