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The Works

By Mark Jenkins, January 10, 2014



JULIE ROBERTS, *The Kinder Transport/New Dawn*, 2013, Oil on linen, 24 x 24 inches. Copyright Julie Roberts, courtesy CONNERSMITH.

Connersmith's current group exhibition is titled "The Works: Recent Painting, Sculpture, Video," and most of the art is from the past five years. Yet it includes a 1962 painting by Washington Color School member Howard Mehring, who died 35 years ago, and a 2006 piece by light artist Leo Villareal that doesn't showcase his latest techniques.

Many items are footnotes to the artists' latest show at the gallery. Julie Roberts's paintings depict children who took the Kindertransport from Nazi Germany to safety in Britain, while her colleague Kenny Hunter's sculptures involve birds. His "The Wasteland" shows nature perched uncertainly atop a oil drum. Birds also feature in Erik Thor Sandberg's three meticulous neoclassical/surrealist paintings. In the largest of them, a nude woman rides a deer and a boar and is posed just at the point where wild forest yields to cultivated fields.

Maria Friberg's short video is a visual pun on its title, "Transmission"; it observes moving cars from underneath, the better to observe their workings. Equally kinetic is Villareal's "Chasing Rainbows (Horizontal)," whose lighted tubes recall Dan Flavin's fluorescent-era pieces. But the tubes actually contain LEDs, which allow myriad colors and patterns. At the other extreme, Mehring's "Untitled" is a rectangle of calm, mottled yellow. It doesn't shimmy or shout, but its subtle gradations have the power to transfix.

The Works. On view through Jan. 18 at Connersmith, 1358 Florida Ave. NE; 202-588-8750, www.connersmith.us.com.