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First Friday roundup: Home is where the art is



COURTESY PHOTO

"Mesa" by Mariah Johnson, on view at UTSA Satellite Space.

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BY EMILY SEALE

Lili Peña Dyer's series of all-white wall sculptures in the lobby of the Aloft Hotel fosters a meditative environment, a rarity in this world of sensory overload. The collection is titled *Release*, and the canvases, numbered 1 through 5, are covered with objects that resemble eggshells and cast an assortment of interesting shadows. In "Release 1," the broken spheres huddle together near the center of the piece. In "2" and "3," they are scattered and smashed into smaller shards. In "4" and "5," fewer and fewer of the pieces remain. This progressive yet somehow serene destruction reminded me of life's toll on human emotion: At times we're composed — gathered — other times our wits are strewn in all directions, and the best we can hope for is renewed strength to pick up the pieces and find wholeness once again. The

pure simplicity of these sculptures could inspire you to do just that. *Through August 31, Aloft San Antonio Airport Lobby, 838 NW Loop 410, (210) 541-8881*

At Blue Star's February Collective gallery, Thomas Cummins is showing two light boxes, which he made with the aid of an Artist Foundation grant. The photographs hang directly opposite one another in a small space, encouraging the inevitable dialogue. They share the same subject: a barn cum artists' studio down the road from Blue Star that was condemned because of asbestos contamination and unceremoniously demolished. Cummins captured the images approximately eight months apart. The first picture, which shows the structure still intact, was taken during the day. Sunlight streams through a partially open overhead door, infusing the room with warmth. Red flags, left behind after some sort of gathering, hang from the rafters. The other image, taken at night, shows the building's shell after the destruction has begun. Artificial light floods the space, casting an eerie glow; the walls are gone, but tattered strips of those red flags remain. Cummins's installation ponders the interplay between the things we own, need, use, and create, and the spaces in which we house them. In his words, "You can think of a space without objects, but you can't think of objects without a space." Cummins was one of the tenants who was suddenly displaced when EPA ordered a site cleanup, and these pictures succeed in conveying the sense of emptiness and confusion the residents must have felt when they were forced to move. *Camtiembre, February Collective, (210) 385-2484 or (773) 387-0353*

This ... Is Your ..., *This ... Is My ...*, a group exhibition curated by Salvador Castillo at the UTSA Satellite Space, explores concepts of home, both in its tangible incarnations and as an abstract combination of feelings and memories.

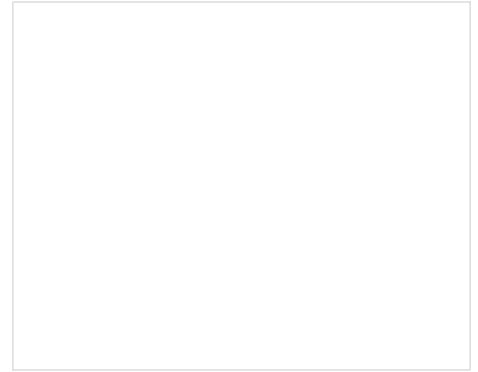
Los Angeles-based Mariah Johnson rolls, folds, and stacks old bedsheets and pillowcases purchased from thrift stores on the floor and wooden shelves. The layers of material resemble geological strata, as Johnson acknowledges in a piece she calls "Mesa." The repetitive folding of fabrics is also akin to the task of a homemaker, which imbues this work with a nostalgic quality.

Hilary Harnischfeger uses paper, ink, plaster, and glass to create sculptures that look like partially chipped and polished crystals and geodes. Each work reveals surprising elements in its complex, compounded layers.

Leslie Wayne creates enticingly tactile layers, too, by layering oil paint so thickly on small wood panels that they morph into sculptural objects. By manipulating her medium until it is no longer recognizable, she challenges her viewers' expectations and creates a sense of disorientation.

Three collages, whose titles correspond to the seasons, are Hilary Pecis's contribution. Each panel contains a jumble of images, incorporating myriad gemstones and baubles resembling Christmas ornaments.

Gisela Insuaste's "Woodlines" — an ink and gouache drawing on wood of a seemingly endless path through a whimsical forest of tall, blue sticks — hangs within the installation "Camino," which brings the drawing to life. Viewers can walk the short, spiral path, threaded between the spindly poles. Insuaste's



Inspiration for this work came from treks she made through the jungles of Ecuador and the woods of New Hampshire, where she was struck by the similarities between these two disparate places, and this installation evokes the universality of human experience — no matter where you live or how unique your background, there is always someone, somewhere in the world, who is sharing a similar emotion or action. Through August 23, UTSA Satellite Space, (210) 212-7146, (210) 458-4391.

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