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ALGERINA PERNA/BALTIMORE SUN

Plunging prices and contaminants in the recycling stream have affected business at Waste Management's sorting facility in Howard County.





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ARTS, PEOPLE AND EVENTS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

In living color

Artists bloom at two different gallery shows PG 26

Season's greetings from The Meeting House

Gallery's 'La Primavera' exhibit bursts with nature in both abstract and sharp focus

By MIKE GIULIANO

The five-artist exhibit "La Primavera" was true to its name by opening during the spring at The Meeting House Gallery, but this show continues to bloom now that we are well into summer.

Most of the artists make direct reference to nature in their work, but that's not always the case. Photographer Don James, for instance, often uses digital processes to accentuate the abstract qualities he finds in the built environment.

In "Room Without a View," James calls your attention to broken window panes through which can be seen a well-worn wood wall. Although the image is relatively sharp, a combination of tight cropping and slight blurring make it a bit difficult to get your bearings. Likewise, "Quonsot Hut Ribs" features a metalsided structure that is easy enough to identify, and yet its arcing structure makes it verge on being a geometric abstraction. Things get really abstract in "Wheels in Motion," in which you can barely make out wheels that are mostly a dense blur.

James also brings his abstracting tendencies to his views of nature. In "Birch Tree," there is such a close-up depiction of the tree bark that it resembles an abstract painting in which a nearly all-white surface is marked by irregularly spaced, vertical brown lines.

His "Jordan Pond" is recognizably a body of water, but the blurring emphasizes its ripples and reflections.

A second photographer, Patty Hankins, brings a deliberately sharper focus to her work. She favors such tightly cropped images that the viewer is pulled right up to blooming flowers in photos including "Center of an Orange Ranunculus," "Petals of a Purple and White Dahlia" and "Orange and Yellow Tulip." It's easy to identify these flowers, but it's also easy to find yourself thinking about them as bursts of color.

Flowers are also among the pictorial subjects favored by Diane Shipley in her watercolors and acrylic paintings.

"Bird of Paradise" is a close-up view in



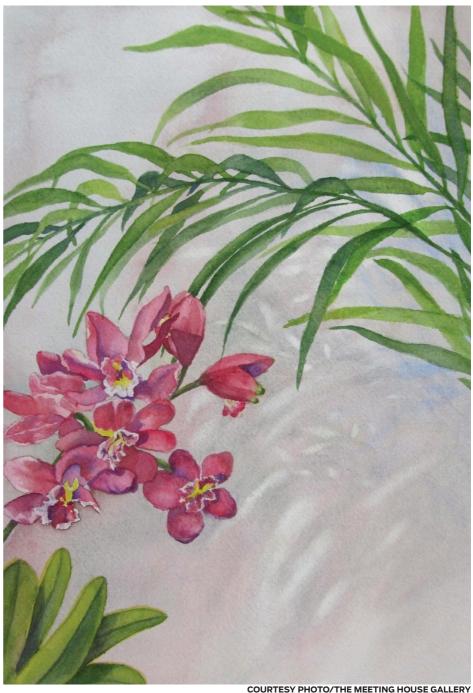
COURTESY PHOTO/THE MEETING HOUSE GALLERY Don James, "Jordan Pond."

which there are vivid orange spikes as a defining feature of that unusual flower. Typical of her work, "Bird of Paradise" also has some gently softening touches within an otherwise brightly hued picture.

Shipley offers a somewhat wider view of nature in "Birch Trees." This forest scene is a quietly reductive image in which the individual trees are white poles set against a white ground and with a brownish wash as the background. Equally spare is "Beach Grass," in which slender blades of grass cast shadows against the sand.

Nature is also the most frequent subject matter for Teresa Sites, but she addresses it through modestly sized, mixed-media collages, in which densely layered photographic images and decorative patterning give an emotional sense of the subject.

In "Bird," for instance, several small birds are surrounded by so many leaves, flowers and other organic references that your eyes have to hunt for the birds. Equally dense are collages including "Meadow," "Planets," "Clocks" and "Crossword."



COURTEST PHOTO/ THE MI

Diane Shipley, "Island Shadows."

Yet another medium is explored by Jann Tamburello, whose functional ceramics leave you in no doubt that you could use these teapots, trays, pitchers and bowls. Two different ceramic methods are on display here.

There are stoneware pieces in which the green- and brown-toned objects incorporate occasional leafy patterns, and there are porcelain pieces with subdued shades of green and blue providing calm surfaces for more detailed patterning.

"La Primavera" runs through July 28 at The Meeting House Gallery, in the Oakland Mills Interfaith Center at 5885 Robert Oliver Place in Columbia. Call 410-730-4090 or go to themeetinghouse.org.