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- [Sports](#)
- [Arts & Entertainment](#)
- [Crime Report](#)
- [Letters to the Editor](#)
- [Classifieds](#)

Northern Virginia Art Beat



By Kevin Mellema

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Art in The Little City

"Phases," the big all-member Falls Church Arts show has its opening reception this Friday evening from 7 – 9 p.m. at ArtSpace Falls Church (410 S. Maple Ave., Falls Church). The show continues through March 21.



Jason Horowitz's "Shi-Queeta Lee."

Trans-Perspectives

Jason Horowitz's "DRAG," at the Curator's Office (1515 14th St. NW, Suite 201, Washington, D.C.). The exhibit runs Feb. 20 - March 27. The gallery is open Wednesday – Saturday, noon – 6 p.m. For more details, call 202-387-1008 or visit www.curatorsoffice.com. The opening reception is this Saturday, Feb. 20, from 6 – 8 p.m.


Arlington-based art photographer Jason Horowitz has work in two major shows on the local art scene, and now his solo show opening at Curator's Office, it's hard to miss Horowitz's series of drag queen images around town.

Roughly four years ago, Horowitz began his "Corpus" series, featuring large-scale photographic prints of somewhat vignettted human anatomy. The current Drag series began two years later as a subset, and now includes images of over 10 of the D.C. area's most famous drag queens (not that any of them are household names, but we'll take their word for it).

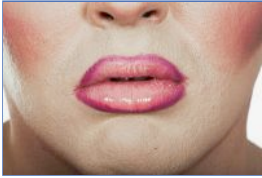
No matter what the subject matter, Horowitz's work typically seeks to find a tension point between attraction and repulsion within the viewer. As he states, "Art is supposed to take you out of your normal way of seeing, and get you to see the world in a new way." It's a notion that most of us in the art world would agree with, but Horowitz is a bit more challenging with it than most.

He wants to nudge us out of our comfort zone, thereby challenging people to look at themselves and the world around them, in previously unexamined ways. "Nudge" is the operative word here;

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some sort. Then again, most artists are: he's just a little more up front about it, and willing to directly challenge the viewer in the process.



Horowitz's "Ba'Naka."

The work doesn't reach any grand overall conclusion, per se. It's more about the exploration of subject matter, and the viewer's perception of it along the way.

The scale of the finished work is undeniably a key element here. A standard-size print for the "Corpus" series is 42-by-63 inches. Sizable enough to be sure, but comically diminutive compared to the pair of whopping 80-by-120 inch mural-sized images currently hanging at Arlington Arts Center (3550 Wilson Blvd., Arlington) through April 3. For more about Arlington Arts Center, visit

www.arlingtonartscenter.org.

As extreme as the print size seems at first, the images at Arlington Art Center seem comfortably at home there. Needless to say, when you blow up a photo of the mouth and jaw area to some 10 feet across, the amount of normally unseen detail is going to be significant: Skin texture seems more akin to a tiled mosaic than human flesh, pores seem more like pits in a human landscape that recalls aerial landscape photography.

The Drag series is especially disquieting to the viewer when presented with distinctly male facial features, slathered in pancake make up in an effort to present a faux female facade. It reaches its most palatable zenith when the painted landscape cracks or sheds bits of errant make up, revealing the physical truth beneath, which is to the subject at odds with the female-based psychology within.

In a bizarre twist, neither the viewer nor subject seems fully at home, or at peace, with this physical-emotional discord. Viewers often don't quite know what exactly to make of it all. While the drag queens, anticipating such responses, often display challenging defensive attitudes, these are tough, grizzled sexual-identity warriors, not soft, fluffy wall flowers.

Note: Two additional images are part of the 28th annual WPA art auction at the Katzen Center/American University Museum. The auction will take place on March 6, with all art works on view at Katzen until then. For complete information, visit auction.wpacd.org.

Artist Opportunities

Target gallery in the Torpedo Factory (105 N. Union St., Alexandria) is hosting an all-female art show in May titled "Woman Made," with an entry deadline of March 16. The art show is closely followed by the Female Short Film Festival in June. Deadlines for female filmmakers are as follows, with escalating entry fees the longer you wait: \$20 by March 19; \$25 by March 26; and \$30 by April 2. For more details on both exhibition opportunities, visit www.torpedofactory.org/galleries/targetcallforentry.htm.

The Northern Virginia Art Beat is compiled by Kevin Mellema. To e-mail submissions, e-mail them to kevinmellema@gmail.com



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