

Gallery Picks of the Month:
Word play, outsider art, and drawing the line



"World Play: Simeen Farhat," at Cris Worley Fine Arts June 29-August 3.
Photo courtesy of Cris Worley Fine Arts

A fresh exploration of outsider art, a three-dimensional artist's statement in colorful resin, and drawings that line up some top contemporary talent: These are just a few of the reasons to visit our top art gallery picks in the coming month.

THOMAS KENNAUGH: Solo Exhibition at Photographs Do Not Bend Opening reception: June 29, 5-8 pm Exhibition dates: June 29-August 3

Generally defined as art created outside the boundaries of official culture, outsider art encompasses works from the naïve, the untrained, the visionary,

and the mentally or emotionally challenged. Having curated artists of this genre in Columbus, Ohio, Thomas Kennaugh was inspired to create his own compelling collages and sculptures.

A buyer and seller of fine art and photography since 1974, Kennaugh draws on his vast archives to make each of his multilayered pieces, which have more than a little in common with the likes of Joseph Cornell and Peter Blake. Now based in Denton, he reveals his latest collages in his first Texan exhibition at PNDB.

The “Victorian futurism” explored in the steampunk movement also has an influence on Kennaugh, who cites sources such as Norman Brosterman’s *Out of Time: Designs for the Twentieth-Century Future* — featuring visions of the flying cities and bubble-topped cars from the 19th and 20th centuries — as an ongoing inspiration.

“It’s a great book, and it’s pretty steampunk before that term came out,” says Kennaugh. “I was a picker of images for [Brosterman], and that started my interest in those kinds of images. It’s interesting to see how confusing technology is and the wonder of where we’re going.”

Needless to say, for Kennaugh the future is “wow.”

WORD PLAY: Simeen Farhat, at Cris Worley Fine Arts Opening reception: June 29, 6-8 pm Exhibition dates: June 29-August 3

In Simeen Farhat’s hands, words are much more than type on a page. In her vibrant exhibition opening June 29 at Cris Worley, the Pakistan-born, Dallas-based artist turns everything from snippets of poetry to her own artist’s statement into textural, abstract sculptures of cast resin.

Sometimes you have to leave your home base to get the attention you deserve, and Farhat’s 2010 exhibition at Xerxes Fine Arts in London led to group and solo appearances in Austria, Bahrain, Dubai, Germany, Kuwait,

Pakistan and Switzerland. Her Cris Worley exhibit is a homecoming of sorts, and the pieces shown in “Word Play” have an intimate focus not found in her earlier work

Says Worley, “She’s using text from actual email correspondence and other specific, personal things. They’re magic words that are shaped like a genie emerging from an oil lamp. It has that feel from her culture, and you get bits from her cultural references without it being so obvious.”

According to Farhat, her sculpture speaks “eloquently about life, death, love, freedom of thoughts, and philosophy.” The fact that it does so without ever shouting at the viewer makes the medium and the message equally important.

ON DRAWING: LINE

various artists, at Holly Johnson Gallery Opening reception: June 29, 6-8 pm
Exhibition dates: June 29-August 17

In the art world, two heads can be often be better than one. Dallas gallerist Holly Johnson took this approach for her latest exhibition, teaming up with colleague Devin Borden to curate the best in works on paper from 11 established artists. After its Dallas run, the show will travel to Borden’s eponymous gallery in Houston through September and October.

Friends for 20 years, the duo’s “On Drawing: Line” might just be the first in a series of collaborations; if all goes well, they’re planning another dual show with a different theme next year. For this summer’s team effort, painters, sculptors and installation artists have all taken their turn with pen, pencil and paper, and Johnson says the results are more complex than they may first appear.

“Some are more minimal and obsessive, other are more abstract expressionism,” she says. “They’re challenging in the way they’re made — almost every [piece] is like a little jewel.”