

# In the galleries: Finding the unknown within what is known

---

By Mark Jenkins March 31

There's a vivid surprise, if not quite a revelation, at the rear of the University of Maryland Art Gallery. The best way to approach it is slowly, via a careful inspection of the photographs in "Wynn Bullock: Revelations."

Bullock (1902-1975) was a California-bred singer who performed in Europe in the 1920s. While there, he encountered avant-garde art, notably Man Ray's abstract photos. Bullock pursued photography as a hobby at first but went pro in the 1940s, doing commercial work while experimenting on the side.

The earliest pieces in this selection are from 1939-1941, and they include examples of solarization, in which the image appears scorched by light. Subsequent work is more representational, although not documentary. Bullock made moody landscapes, sometimes punctuated by a nude body, and views of damaged things and overgrown places. A few of these peer through windows or doors, stressing the camera's limited viewpoint.

All of these photos are black and white, usually with rich middle tones. But in the early 1960s, Bullock began his "Color Light Abstraction" series, yielding free-form compositions as bold and sweeping as the abstract canvases painted in the same era. Technically, the Kodachrome slides were ahead of their time, and the artist soon returned to monochromatic work. Only recently have digital scanners enabled these stunning photos to be reproduced properly and become better known.

Bullock wrote that he sought to "evoke a sense of the unknown through the known, the invisible through the visible." The photographer surely accomplished this in tangles of gray-and-black swirls such as "Tree Trunk." Yet his wildest forays into the unknown boast volcanic reds, incendiary yellows and intergalactic greens.

**Wynn Bullock: Revelations** On view through April 14 at the University of Maryland Art Gallery, 1202 Art-Sociology Building, College Park, Md. 301-405-1474. [artgallery.umd.edu](http://artgallery.umd.edu).

Glenn Goldberg

“Of Leaves and Clouds,” the title of Glenn Goldberg’s show at GWU’s Luther W. Brady Gallery, suggests nature pictures. That’s not quite what the New York artist does, despite his depiction of things commonly seen in gardens and skies. The leaves are simple, curved lozenges, the stalks are as regular as cardboard tubes, and among the birds are rubber duckies. They’re all archetypes, closer to Lichtenstein’s comic-book heroines than Monet’s waterlilies.

Although his canvases’ central images are representational, Goldberg is most concerned with form and pattern. He often uses ink to outline contours and fills areas with thousands of dots. (These are irregularly shaped and spaced, unlike Lichtenstein’s.) There are single-color acrylic washes, which are flat, watery and sometimes overlapping, in the mode of post-painterly abstraction.

The artist acknowledges the influence of his wife’s work as a weaver and fabric designer. He also shows an affinity for ceramics, turning leaf forms into standalone pieces of glazed porcelain. At their most decorative, Goldberg’s paintings look rather too much like tablecloths. But darker, denser pictures, such as the “Morning” series, pack more juice. Their motifs seem primal, not merely pretty.

**Glenn Goldberg: *Of Leaves and Clouds*** On view through April 14 at George Washington University Luther W. Brady Gallery, 805 21st St. NW, Second Floor. 202-994-1525. [gwu.edu/~bradyart/brady/exhibitions.html](http://gwu.edu/~bradyart/brady/exhibitions.html).

## Michael Platt

White markings on brown bodies are central to Michael Platt’s photo-based, ritual-inspired prints. But the pieces in “Pathfinders,” the D.C. artist’s show at Honfleur Gallery, superimpose various found patterns in addition to the chalky body paint. Fabric, brick, wood and vegetation overlay Platt’s female nudes and sometimes appear to merge with their faces and bodies. In these earth-toned pictures, the fusion suggests rootedness.

The photo collages are mostly printed on canvas, adding another texture to the layered look. A few are on banners of cotton or shimmery polyester, draped or freely hanging. “Jute Dancers” arrays the same figure on three overlapping, translucent panels, so the impressions can be seen as a trio or as multiple aspects of a single person.

A statement by Platt and his wife, poet Carol A. Beane, hails “those who take the first steps on a path/ that others may walk it.” Yet the artist’s work rarely simulates motion. Aside from those swaying dancers, Platt’s seekers seem to be in a place of stillness and contemplation.

**Michael Platt: *Pathfinders*** On view through April 9 at Honfleur Gallery, 1241 Good Hope Rd. SE. 202-365-8392. [honfleurgallery.com](http://honfleurgallery.com).

## Linda Troeller

Shot mostly at European spas, the photos in Linda Troeller’s book “Healing Waters” observe patrons enjoying a certain kind of liquid refreshment. That might sound less stimulating to peruse than to experience, but Watergate Gallery’s “Healing Waters

and Beyond” does indeed go beyond images of the rich at ease. It also features photos from two edgier series.

Troeller’s picturesque views of mud baths, waterfalls and baroque pools include one that evokes hot water with what appear to be burns in the film negative. The photographer further departs from straightforward documentation in a series of photo-collages that compare the treatment — societal as well as medical — of TB and AIDS patients in the 1930s and 1980s, respectively.

The largest pictures are from another book, “Living in the Chelsea Hotel.” Glimpses of everyday life at that Manhattan boho refuge include participants in a cross-dressing class, while the nighttime vista from the building’s roof becomes a near-abstract swoop. Wherever Troeller takes her camera, it seems, she’s eying a sort of rapture.

***Linda Troeller: Healing Waters and Beyond*** On view through April 15 at the Watergate Gallery, 2552 Virginia Ave. NW. 202-338-4488. [watergategalleryframedesign.com](http://watergategalleryframedesign.com).

## **Donald Davidson**

Accuracy is as important as delicacy to Donald Davidson’s artwork. The pictures in “Watercolor Botanicals,” the D.C. artist’s show at the Wohlfarth Galleries, were made in national parks and wildlife refuges where Davidson (a longtime friend of this writer) labored as an illustrator. Each rendering is scientifically correct as well as beautiful.

Before turning to this endeavor nearly 20 years ago, Davidson was known for bold, neo-expressionist canvases. Now the big gesture is absent from his style, although most of the pictures were executed in vast Western expanses. They’re drawn on the spot in black ink and then completed with watercolors, without use of photographs or specimens. Perhaps that’s why these depictions of individual wildflowers, plucked visually from their surroundings, nonetheless hint at the landscapes in which they grow.

***Watercolor Botanicals by Donald Davidson*** On view through April 15 at Wohlfarth Galleries, 3418 Ninth St. NE. 202-536-8022. [wohlfarthgalleries.com](http://wohlfarthgalleries.com).

 **1 Comment**