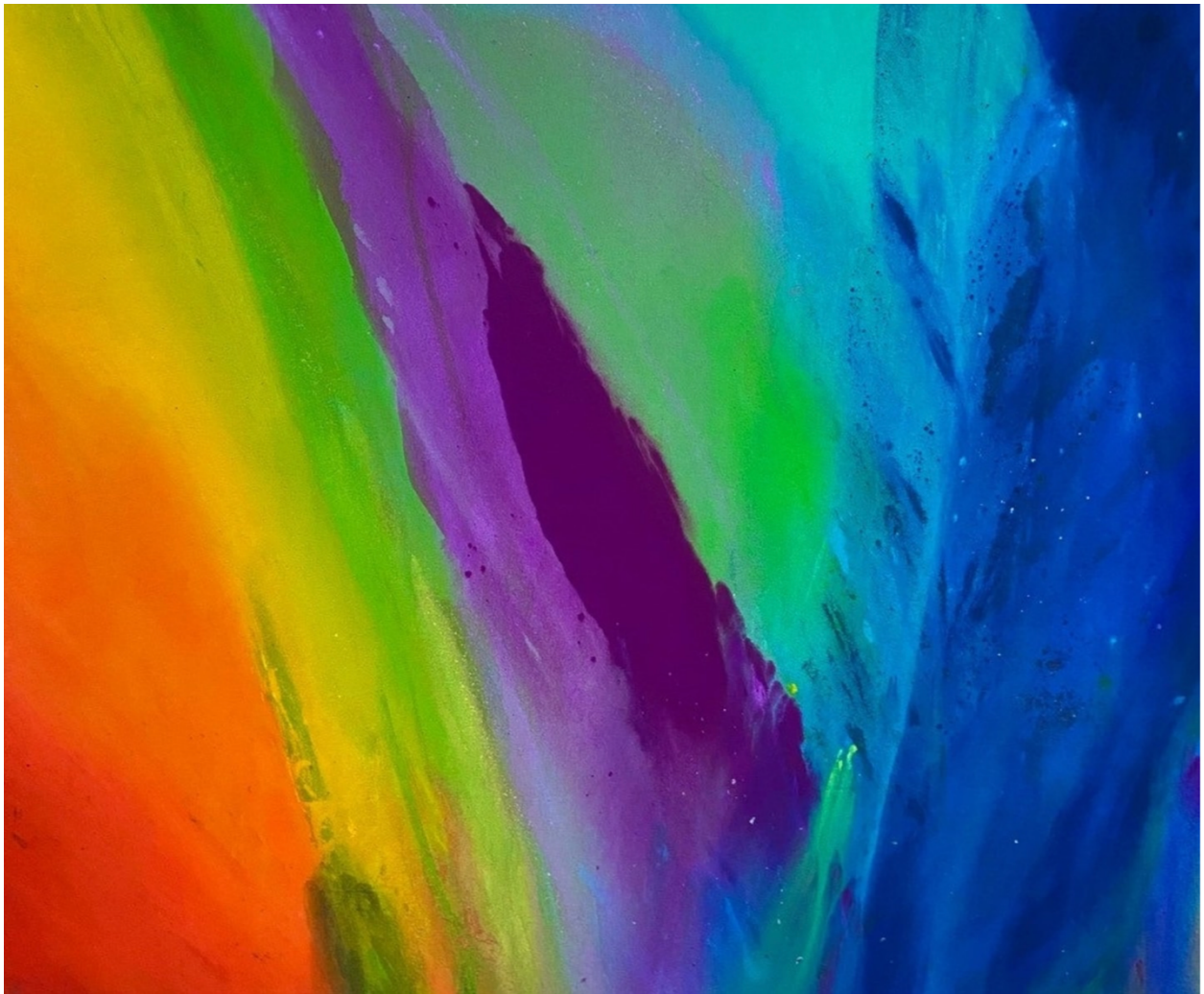


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<https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2025/09/10/women-artists-dmv-american-university-museum/>

A sprawling survey highlights the women making art around D.C.



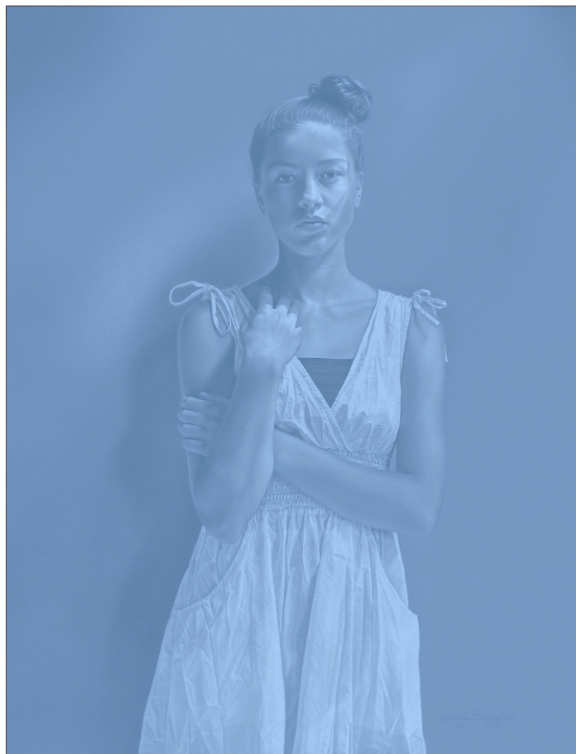
Barbara Januszkiewicz, "Someone to Watch Over Me," 2025. Diluted acrylics on unprimed canvas.
(Barbara Januszkiewicz)

Review by Mark Jenkins

Women depict other women, and sometimes themselves, as everyday people, stylized archetypes, allegorical figures and goddesses in [“Women Artists of the DMV: A Survey Exhibition”](#) at the American University Museum. There are abstract pieces as well in this array of 63 works — one by each contributor — but the selection favors representative art.

That may reflect the taste of artist, blogger and curator Florencio Lennox (Lenny) Campello, who organized the show. But the dominance of representational work could just be a fluke, since the AU Museum is merely the most prominent location for a sweeping project that encompasses exhibitions at more than a dozen other regional venues, stretching from Front Royal to Annapolis. Campello, who says he chose 425 artists from nearly 4,000 applicants, claims his undertaking is “the largest curated survey of contemporary living women artists in the nation and the first survey of female visual artists working across the DMV.”

Given the survey’s breadth, a cohesive vision would be too much to ask. The artworks, many of them first-rate, are best considered individually, although some affinities are noteworthy.



Wendy Jones Donahoe, “Olivia,” 2010. Colored pencil on Colourfix paper.(Wendy Jones Donahoe)



Judith Peck, "Coastal Communities," 2022. Oil on panel. (Judith Peck)

In addition to being local, the work is mostly recent. There are a few pieces that date to the 1990s and one 1961 picture by the late Lida Moser, who came to prominence as a New York City street photographer but spent the latter part of her life in D.C.'s Maryland suburbs. More typical, though, is art made in just the past few years.

The AU Museum show overflows the gallery of the Alper Initiative for Washington Art. Additional items are displayed in the lobby and hallway, as well as in the outdoor sculpture garden. Only six pieces occupy the latter space, which could hold more, but they include exemplary works by two well-established artists: Barbara Liotta, who pits solidity against airiness by dangling stones on cords, and Dalya Luttwak, who alludes to her family history with steel sculptures of root systems whose starkness is offset by brightly painted surfaces. Nearby is Valerie Theberge's formidable yet delicate pile of four egg-shaped forms, covered in intricate mosaics and stacked so they appear to teeter.



Laurel Lukaszewski, "Summer Storm," 2025. Porcelain. (Laurel Lukaszewski)

Inside the building are smaller works by other noted sculptors, including Margery E. Goldberg (whose Zenith Gallery is another "Women of the DMV" site). Her "He She Tree" is two streamlined

figures rendered in elegant striped wood, while Kirsty Little's "Blooming" combines the manufactured and organic in a nest of floral-hued wires. Sophia McCrocklin's "Sassafras Tea Leaf" is a six-foot-high but otherwise faithful reproduction of a single leaf, made of yellow fabric. Laurel Lukaszewski takes a much less literal approach, conjuring "Summer Storm" from curls of wall-mounted white porcelain.

These pieces are among a surprisingly small number that depict natural forms. So do entries by master printmaker Susan Goldman and inventive painter Patricia Goslee, but their organic shapes appear derived more from decorative art than from real-world objects.

The show includes just two references, one playful and the other earnest, to Washington's most publicized group of artists, the colorists who explored a new mode of abstraction in the late 1950s. Andrea Way's "Color School" is an intricately gridded drawing, seemingly all black and white, whose title is a wry reference to reds and blues so submerged that they're barely visible. Barbara Januszkiewicz's exuberant "Someone to Watch Over Me" is a jagged rainbow painted with the method, if not exactly in the style, of Morris Louis.

Among the other abstractions, the least expected is by Muriel Hasbun, who's known primarily as a photographer. Her fascinating entry is a chemically treated aluminum plate rich with blacks and bluish grays, bisected by a blurry bar that can be read as a horizon line. The piece is part landscape but mostly industrial fantasia.

Lesser known than the mid-century Washington colorists, yet more pertinent to Campello's selection, are the D.C. realists who emerged in the 1970s. The legacy of such artists as Manon Cleary and Rebecca Davenport (and a few of their male peers) can be glimpsed in virtuosic drawings of girls by Wendy Jones Donahoe and Ellen Cornett. The former is a creamy portrait, expertly shaded and modeled; the latter is a visual synopsis of a fairy tale whose grisliness is evoked by the small bones cradled in the subject's skirt. No less detailed but gentler is Pearl Shen's nearly life-size ink painting of a woman on a bicycle, rendered in style midway between American photorealism and Chinese gongbi ("skillful brush").



Kate Kretz, "Gunlicker," 2015. Oil and acrylic on gator board. (Kate Kretz)



Sarah Bentley, "Building Walls," 2018. Oil on linen. (Sarah Bentley)

Some other realists add a dash of fabulism, often to sound a political note. Kate Kretz depicts a man fetishistically licking an automatic weapon; Sarah Bentley portrays a saintly woman, complete with gold-leaf halo, kneeling at a border wall; and Dana Ellyn shows a migrant mother and child hooked like fish in a catch-and-release dilemma. All three painters employ neoclassical techniques to make timely images.

Equally charged but more historical are two commentaries on the Black American experience. Renée Stout's black-and-white painting, "Cracked Baby," is modeled on a 19th-century photograph of a Black child but inspired by the late-1990s crack cocaine inferno. Anne Bouie's found-object assemblage conjures a tangled cultural inheritance by contrasting stereotypical Black memorabilia with rough wooden pieces that suggest African folk art.

The show contains few new-media works, but one of the standouts is Melissa Ichiuji's "Faces of Kali," which combines video, performance and textile art. Inspired by the fierce Hindu goddess, the piece consists of 10 looping video portraits in which the artist covers her face with masks, hoods and fabrics that are in constant flux. They're twisted, sewn and sometimes cut, all while clinging to Ichiuji's face. A dynamic metaphor for the processes of artistic invention and self-creation, "Faces of Kali" embodies what all the participants in "Women of the DMV" do.

Women Artists of the DMV: A Survey Exhibition

The American University Museum, Katzen Arts Center, 4400 Massachusetts Ave. NW. 202-885-3630. american.edu/cas/museum.