



For Immediate Release

Signals exhibition opening reception:
Friday, October 12 from 7 to 9 pm

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Signals

Curated by JW Mahoney

Over 40 area artists in two spaces create DCAC's new exhibition which declares that there is a distinct Washington School of art and offers a manifesto to prove it.

JW Mahoney, DC curator, artist and arts writer takes on the task of proving that there is a distinct "school" of art that has been coming from Washington, DC for decades. As he states in his manifesto, "*We've always recognized the unique qualities of what we've been doing here, fundamentally distinct from the values, and fashions of mainstream contemporary art. **Signals** isn't intended simply to showcase the best artists in DC, but rather, to demonstrate how alternative the Washington art scene really is.*"

To prove his point he has gathered over 40 area artists and created a massive salon-style exhibition. Included in the exhibit will be work by Hannah Sears, Jeff Spaulding, Greg Hannan, Robin Rose, Richard Dana, Sharon Fishel, David Jung, Renee Butler, Joe White, Tazuko Ichikawa, Susan Greenleaf, Kurt Godwin, John Dreyfuss, Bill Hill, Carol Goldberg, and Renee Stout. Mahoney will hold a debate on the subject and there will be a poetry reading and other events surrounding the exhibition.

Since the exhibit is far too large for the DCAC gallery walls additional space needed to be commandeered, and a pop-up gallery across the street in the now vacant space once occupied by the Café Lautrec will handle one particular theme while the home gallery hosts the other. The mural of Toulouse Lautrec's face still holds commanding sway over Adams Morgan and will watch over audiences crisscrossing 18th Street to go between the spaces to decide for themselves whether or not Mahoney proves his case.

Copies of the Manifesto will be available at the galleries and online. DCAC's tumblr account will be regularly seeded with provocations by Mahoney to engage the larger art world not only on his premise of the Washington School but on the idea that a "school" can even exist in the 21st Century.

Signals will be open from October 12 through November 25. Opening reception on Friday, October 12 from 7 to 9 pm. Artists talk on Sunday, November 25 at 5:00 pm. Gallery hours are Wednesdays through Sundays from 2 to 7 pm. All events are free and open to the public and are at DC Arts Center (DCAC), 2438 18th Street NW, Washington DC. For more information call 202-462-7833, email info@dcartscenter.org, or visit www.dcartscenter.org.

See an abbreviated version of the manifesto follows this page.

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A WASHINGTON MANIFESTO

1. WHY A MANIFESTO? IT'S TIME FOR ONE.

From the early 1950's into the 21st century, Washington's art has sustained a history of contemporary visionaries. We've always recognized the unique qualities of what we've been doing here, fundamentally distinct from the values, and fashions of mainstream contemporary art.

2. IS THERE REALLY A WASHINGTON SCHOOL OF ART? DEFINITELY - BUT IN ALICE COOPER'S WORDS, SCHOOL'S OUT FOREVER.

The Washington School consists of renegades and outliers. As a School, we're Well-Educated Outsiders. We've been functioning as anomalies, working under the radar.

3. WHAT MAKES WASHINGTON ART SO INDEPENDENT? IT'S THE GENIUS LOCI, THE SPIRIT OF THE PLACE.

What Washington area art has to offer is only its authenticity, its unique identity. 150 years ago, this city was a war zone. What was at stake in that war was the overdue liberation of an enslaved people - and black culture's own outsider status has predated and conditioned every aspect of Washington's aesthetic identity - a city of abstract ideals and open but regularly disempowered culture.

Here in DC, artists are most comfortable as speculative symbolists... We see we live in a city full of symbols, so why not make our own? And our power is the power to speculate - to re-imagine power itself. We know that information is power - so our art is often information-rich, no matter what its media or language.

4. WHAT DOES "SPECULATIVE SYMBOLISM" MEAN? WHY INVENT SUCH A TERM? BECAUSE IT WORKS.

We're used to the idea that symbols often signal clear meanings, as a bald eagle, a handshake, or a stop sign can. But a symbol offers a communion between an invisible significance and a visible graphic presence. A cross, a yin-yang, or a swastika mean a great deal more than their visual forms may imply. Our locality incites us to compete, challenge, consciously by-pass, adore, or otherwise process such established symbols. And our power is the power to speculate - to re-imagine the power of visual images themselves. We know that information is power - so our art is often information-rich, no matter what its media or language.

5. IS OUR ART "ALTERNATIVE" HERE, THE WAY THERE'S ALTERNATIVE MUSIC ELSEWHERE?

There are sustaining traditions in "alternative music" that center on cities like Athens, Georgia, Portland, Oregon, and Austin, Texas.. Why has an "alternative" visual art, such as our own, remained so behind the curtains? Here, we're already convinced, and inspired by our past and our present, so that we're released to be as meaningful as we want to be. Our work insists that we live in a universe rich with an infinite array of new symbols. We're looking through windows onto something else. It's what we do.

"MY HOPES WERE NEVER BRIGHTER THAN NOW."

FREDERICK DOUGLASS