

5 small Denver art exhibits offer big thrills in the coming weeks

Denver's Month of Printmaking kicks off in March, and this exhibit, at the Center for Visual Art, is one of its early highlights

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March is the in-between time for museums and galleries. The winter blockbusters are winding down and the big summer showcases are yet to begin. Art fans need to seek out the gems.

But they are out there, especially this year when a handful of institutions are presenting well-crafted, tightly-curated, modestly-sized shows.

Think of this list of exhibitions as an à la carte menu of gallery-hopping opportunities. Any one of these choices could make for a satisfying stop — or string them together for a full day's excursion.

Here are five that look promising right now.

A trio of exhibits featuring Ana María Hernando, various locations, through July 5

This is a shining moment for Ana María Hernando. She has solo shows at two of Colorado's most important contemporary spaces, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Denver and the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center. Simultaneously, she is part of a group show at Robischon Gallery.

In the Springs, the retrospective "Cantando Bajito (Singing Softly)" continues through July 3 and brings together many of the elements that Hernando mingles to deep effect in her art: sculptures made from tulle, paintings, drawings and a bit of poetry.

MCA Denver's show (March 5-July 5) is titled "Seguir Cantando (Keep Singing)," and connects to similar themes, unfolding "chromatically, beginning with works rendered in black charcoal, gray tulle, and dark paint to white tulle and embroidery, to new works bursting with color."

Combined with her part in Robischon's "Ostinatos," (through March 21), this a good opportunity to celebrate the career of one of Colorado's crucial voices in visual arts.

“Conversation Pieces: Stories from the Fashion Archives,” Denver Art Museum, through Oct. 11

Many people know about the Denver Art Museum’s vast collection of paintings and sculpture, but its extensive holdings of fashion often fly under the radar.

“Conversation Pieces” shines a bright light on one of DAM’s underrated attractions.

The show has more than 60 objects on the roster. Each is runway-ready, and many are being shown in the galleries for the first time.

On the rack: clothing and accessories from names like Coco Chanel, Yves Saint Laurent, Yohji Yamamoto, Alexander McQueen, John Galliano, Karl Lagerfeld and others. There is a nice local twist to the show, which puts a separate emphasis on some of the outfits worn by Denver’s fashionable set from the past and present.

More info: 720-865-5000 or denverartmuseum.org.

“What We’ve Been Up To: People,” Denver Art Museum, through Sept. 29

“What We’ve Been Up To” is part of the Denver Art Museum’s ongoing series in which the photography department debuts images from its collection that the public has never seen before. So far, the series has been excellent, serving the dual purpose of entertaining patrons with high-quality displays, while at the same time giving Coloradans an opportunity to see some examples of how millions of dollars in public arts funding are being channeled into acquisitions.

As the title explains, this edition focuses on portraits. While that seems narrow, there is plenty of diversity within the genre to keep the show interesting, partly because the curators decided to mix the works of contemporary photographers with images from photo artists dating back to the 1800s. The exhibition’s roster includes Lucas Foglia, Francesca Woodman, Flor Garduno, Tina Modotti, Andrea Modica, Jess T. Dugan and more.

“Futures: 528.0: Regional Printmaking Exhibition,” Center for Visual Art (Part of Month of Printmaking)

Denver’s Month of Printmaking kicks off in March, and this exhibit, at the Center for Visual Art, is one of its early highlights. As the clever title suggests, the show features work by artists who live within a 528-mile radius of the city.



Mark Lunning will have a solo show at the Core Annex, part of the statewide Month of Printmaking. (Provided by the Center for Visual Art)

The point of the curation is material diversity, to put on display “both traditional and alternative methods being used in the field of contemporary printmaking.” Among the jurors are well-respected names, including CVA director and curator Cecily Cullen; Rick Griffith, founder of Denver-based MATTER, the nonprofit that supports printmaking of all sorts; and Chinn Wang, a national artist whose prints are in major museums across the country.

With such a large geographical region in play, the roster is large — very large — with about 70 names on the list, including local stars such as Trine Bumiller, Carlos Frésquez, Viviane Le Courtois, Mark Lunning, Taiko Chandler, Tony Ortega and more.

Month of Printmaking — known better as Mo’ Print — includes scores of exhibitions, talks, workshops and more spread across dozens of galleries and other venues, with major shows at the CVA, RedLine Contemporary Art Center and the Arvada Center.

For info on the CVA show and other Mo’ Print events, go to moprint.org.

“Ostinatos,” Robischon Gallery, through March 21

Robischon Gallery represents many of the region’s top artists, and it usually showcases them through small, solo shows. From time to time, however, the place goes big, putting together work by groups of artists whose output is linked by a

theme or process. When that occurs, the exhibition is almost always a winner because viewers get to see a variety of Colorado's top names all at once.

"Ostinatos" is a good example. The show includes 11 artists, all "exploring the use of repetition in the development of visual form and compositions." In other words, they repeat the same action over and over again, often through small gestures, to make larger objects.

One artist: Derrick Velasquez, whose wall pieces are made from thousands of thin strips of vinyl layered on top of one another. Another: Omar Chacón, who lines up rows of tiny slivers of paint that he pulls together into colorful grids.

Other names in the show include Ana María Hernando, Terry Maker and Paul Corio.

More info: 303.298.7788 or robischongallery.com