

VISUAL ARTS

Artists Go Through a Lens, Creatively

By Mary McCoy
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From puffs of clouds spelling out "Nothing Lasts Forever" to the delicate, faded tones of a grouping of African masks, "Altered Images," at the Gallery at Harmony Hall Regional Center, is a lively and fascinating overview of some of the ways photography can transcend reality to produce remarkably varied images of personal expression.

The exhibition of 36 works by 35 artists from the Mid-Atlantic region was chosen from a field of 400 by juror Angela Adams, exhibition coordinator for the National Museum of Women in the Arts.

The display, sponsored by the Prince George's County Arts Division of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, opened last month at Bowie State College and is on view at Harmony Hall through Jan. 2 before traveling to three other area galleries.

The alterations to the photographs on exhibit take many forms. In one of the more straightforward, Suzanne K. Mast, of Laurel, took a small black-and-white photograph of a lighthouse and playfully dabbed the roof with red paint and the lawn with green.

Brooklyn, N.Y., artist Susan Daboll tore up her photograph of a face and taped it back together in a touching work called "Armor XX." With a piece or two missing, it speaks eloquently of human vulnerability.

Creative use of different photographic techniques is the mainstay of the show. Washington

artist Wendy Vail heightened the feeling of time in her stark shot of a highchair beside a refrigerator by using a printing process in which the image is tinted with watercolors.

C.E.F. Walker, of Greenville, N.C., also created a patina of age in his time-lapse shot of a nude moving to a sitting position.

Because the viewer thinks of a photograph as showing things exactly as they are, the results of experimentation with technical processes can be startling.

Bethesda resident Joan Rosenstein has combined two images in a surreal paper negative. The exquisitely fine details of this light-on-dark doubled image of a tree and two men creeping precariously close to a cliff edge render it dreamlike and haunting.

"Night Trucks" by Crystal Scriber, of Clinton, is a photograph of a painting of a photograph. Its dark jumble of trucks seems to be lit with a glare of red light, like taillights.

Ever since Robert Rauschenberg began collaging photographs into his paintings in the 1950s, photographic images have been fair game for artists to use as raw material. Photos of a bride wearing a gas mask were the starting point of Silver Spring artist Reuven Kuperman's painting "Tel Aviv, Jan. 1991," which conveys the strangeness and terror of the Persian Gulf War.

Computers and photography have been linked for years, providing a fertile area for artists to explore. This show's most high-tech image is a gentle study of a nude that Robert Anderson, of Bloomfield, N.J., updated with a grid of computer-enhanced colors covering the spectrum.

Photography has had a profound effect on our

view of the world, especially in allowing us to see things too small, too quick or too distant to perceive with the unaided eye. Still, after seeing this show, no one will believe the saying that "the camera doesn't lie." These artists use photography as a versatile tool capable of portraying reality and fantasy from many angles.

The show continues at Harmony Hall Regional Center, 10701 Livingston Rd., Fort Washington, through Jan. 2. The gallery is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday. Call 292-8331.

