GALLERIES

STRIKING: Josephine Haden's "Surprise" (acrylic on wood) benefits from its limited cast of characters. Haden's "Attitude" show is at Barry Gallery through Dec. 8.

COURTESY OF JOSEPHINE HADEN

Connection and disconnection

GALLERIES FROM C1

many of his interests. His style draws on early-20th-century French and Russian art — although its rough textures are not very Constructivist — and depicts subjects that are either timeless or in a state of perpetual change. The cunningly designed "Running Man," for example, is a blocky wooden figure that appears to be jumping into a mirror, and whose reflection from certain angles shows a head that isn't really there. (It's actually a bent arm.)

Suter likes things that are, or can be, other things. That explains his interest in centaurs, half man and half horse, and why "Bride with Gantry" depicts a nuptial couple that's also a rocket and the crane supporting it. His paintings are often bordered by expanses of worn lumber, occasionally mingled with metal or painted in metallic tones, but a few of the frames are more delicate: "Dominion" is cradled by a lattice that suggests a Frank Lloyd Wright design, and the curved slats around "The Surfers" mimic the lines of its painted wave. The colors, unusually subdued for acrylics, are sometimes painted on masonry, or evoke ceramics, as in the Greco-Roman assemblage "Eschaton."

Several of the most appealingly direct pictures, including "Binarity" and "Four Flowers," feel archetypal. But no object is perpetual, and much of Suter's art is anxious for metamorphosis, even if the transition is just from painting to sculpture.

Alexander Vasiljev

The title of "Mystify," Alexander Vasiljev's show of photographs at Watergate Gallery, is in part a pun. These rich, deep-focus images were made in Peru's remote Wax Palm Forest, whose towering trees are often cloaked in fog. Most of the 18 photos are simply titled "Mist," followed by a number, and all but one of those is a panoramic view of thick woodland enveloped in blue-gray vapor. Adding to the beguiling haze, Vasiljev gives his photos an encaustic (wax and resin) coating, applied in painterly strokes. He also mounts them on wooden boxes to give them heft as well as depth.

"Mystify" is not all mist and muted-color foliage. One four-exposure piece shows a bird against a bone-white sky, swooping from panel to panel. And sunlight plays a limited but potent role in several of the other photos, which reveal pools of light deep within the forest. The product of an unseen sun whose rays somehow penetrated both the clouds and the tree canopy, these spotlights appear natural, yet eerily theatrical. They draw the eye deep into the image, past the encaustic, through the clouds and perhaps even into the mystic.

Josephine Haden

In "Attitude," Josephine Haden shows works in several styles, but the majority of the pieces are acrylic paintings on wood that depict landscapes dotted with people, animals and modes of upscale transportation. "My intention is neither allegorical nor representational," Haden writes, which may not rule out satirical. The figures in pictures such as "Team Members Only" seem to have wandered out of glossy magazines and seem oblivious to one another or their surroundings. Often rendered in black and white, these escapees from Vogue, GQ and People strike poses in front of full-color deserts or woodlands, with luxury cars parked nearby or jetliners flying overhead. Sometimes, there are skydivers or hot-air balloons. Or peacocks.

Disconnection seems to be the point, but the lack of engagement is a compositional drawback. Some of these paintings just don't hold together well, even with the unifying element of visible wood-grain beneath the backdrops' watery hues. One of the most striking pictures, "Surprise," is a smaller one that portrays just a boy and a bird; it benefits from its limited cast of characters. Also potent are Haden's works on paper, more loosely painted and generally in black, white and a single accent color. Vogue and GQ will never admit it, but sometimes less is indeed more.

Michelle Lisa Herman

As most forms of communication move to the Web, will galleries become obsolete? Michelle Lisa Herman's "Inter-Net," although impeccably high-tech, argues otherwise. The three pieces in this small show, part of the Washington Project for the Arts' "Coup d'Espace" series, are site-specific. One even makes surveillance technology feel homey by supplying a window frame for a video monitor. Although not facing the street, "Virtual Window" uses a camera to present a real-time view of Massachusetts Avenue in front of the building.

Embassy Row isn't exactly Times Square, but "Virtual Window's" random possibilities trump those of "Social Network," a system of speaker pods and motion detectors that chirps "I'm here. Are you there?" in 11 voices, depending on where people amble in the room. More diverse yet also more limited is "Love Letters (Lange Is a Virus)," which performs William S. Burroughs-style cutups on text from e-mail spam. The babble — "love letters written in a secret language," according to Herman — is audible only through a black desk telephone that sits on a small table. Spam is everywhere you don't want it to be, but this particular hypertext experience is available via just one old-style phone in just one non-virtual space.

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DAVID SUTER: OUTSIDE THE BOX
on view through Dec. 31 at Gallery A, 2106 R St. NW; 202-667-2599; *www.alexgalleries.com.*

MYSTIFY: PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALEXANDER VASILJEV
on view through Nov. 30 at Watergate Gallery, 2552 Virginia Ave. NW; 202-338-4488; *www.watergategalleryframedesign.com.*

JOSEPHINE HADEN: ATTITUDE
on view through Dec. 8 at Barry Gallery, Marymount University, 4728 N. 26th St., Arlington; 703-284-1561; *www.josephinehaden.com.*

INTER-NET: MICHELLE LISA HERMAN
on view through Nov. 23 at the Washington Project for the Arts, 2023 Massachusetts Ave. NW; 202-234-7103; *www.wpadc.org.*