

THE GALLERIES

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ANNE MARCHAND/AMERICAN UNIVERSITY MUSEUM

Anne Marchand's "Eternal Feminine," part of the "Radix: The Eternal Feminine" show at the American University Museum.



MAGGIE SINER/WASHINGTON STUDIO SCHOOL

Maggie Siner's "Red Dress on Table," on display in the Washington Studio School's "The Secret Life of Things."

blue background. The contrary colors and shifting focal points give this flat, colorful plane a sense of exceptional depth.

Washington Color School: 50 Years Later Through Dec. 15 at Bethesda Fine Art, 4931 Cordell Ave., Bethesda. 240-800-3628. bethesdafineart.com.

The Secret Life of Things

The items depicted in Washington Studio School's "The Secret Life of Things" may not actually have covert existences, but some carry mysterious import. The title object in Jim Fitzsimmons's "Coffee Maker #1," for example, stands amid such enigmatic cohorts as a mannequin's disembodied arm and hand. The vignette is surreal, but gently so.

The still lifes made by these 10 artists vary in subject, of course, as well as style and emphasis. Some are nearly photorealist, while others are more impressionistic. The play of light can be as central as the actual subjects, as in Carlton Fletcher's shadowy study of a pitcher and vase or Marie Riccio's amber-flooded scene of arranged flowers and branches.

The things reflect the people who use them as well as the ones who portray them. Realist Erin Raedecke playfully renders an abstract canvas that someone — a disappointed artist, surely — has defaced with red X's. In Maggie Siner's slightly cubist paintings, silky bits of female apparel nestle or drape pieces of furniture, representing both an absent person and recent sensual activity. But she uses a similar style to render radicchio, demonstrating that the technique can be just as voluptuous as the object.

The Secret Life of Things Through Dec. 16 at Washington Studio School, 2129 S St. NW. 202-234-3030. washingtonstudioschool.org. style@washpost.com