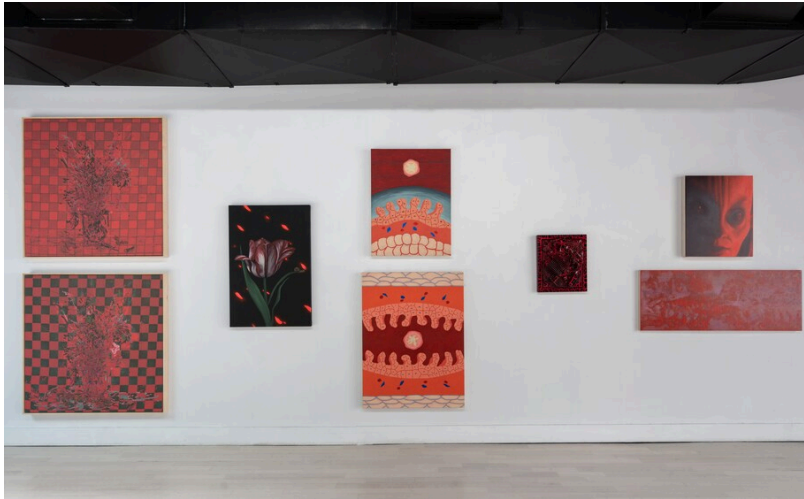




The Washington Post



An installation view of "Focus Group IV" at Von Ammon Co. (Vivian Doering)

In the galleries: Artists imagine red in images from brutal to banal

"In the beginning everything was green," declare the raised red-wax letters of the Harry Gould Harvey IV text piece in the Von Ammon Co. exhibition "Focus Group IV." But most of the works in this show of 28 artists come from some place closer to the end, where violent outcomes are expressed in sanguinary hues.

Among them are Allen-Golder Carpenter's white shirt copiously stained with fake blood — its title evokes JFK's assassination — and Max Hooper Schneider's scarlet diorama, which scrawls the word "blood" in neon in front of a hockey mask that invokes the Friday the 13th flicks.

Red is the show's organizing principle, but not all the participants associate the color with violence. Despite being mostly crimson, several items have a coolly formalist vibe, including Shaun Krupa's and Chino Amobi's exactly hyper-realist paintings of an auger and a flower, respectively, and Donald Moffett's elegantly precision-cut wall sculpture.

Catharine Czudej's homemade lava lamp, assembled from such ingredients as aluminum cans and brake fluid, is funkier but not ominous. Kris Lemsalu and Teruko Kushi's clock, which intriguingly sets delicate porcelain against industrial metal, isn't even exactly red, although it has a coppery patina.

Banality and brutality — and thus American pop culture, including horror movies — are frequent motifs in Von Ammon shows. All that and more are represented here. A woman suffocates a child in Alex Bag's small found-doll sculpture, and Tony Hope's Christmas-themed sculptural mash-up places a dispenser of red gumballs on a stand that incorporates red Christmas lights and a painted red plastic skeleton.

Gentler in tone if not implication, Ignacio Gatica's LED piece is a landscape in which a yellow sun floats above red mountains. The pulsing lights might seem merely decorative, but in fact they denote live data on the prices of gold, silver and copper. In this case, violence is literally buried beneath the surface. — Mark Jenkins, 26 May 2023

Focus Group IV Through June 11 at Von Ammon Co., 3330 Cady's Alley NW