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Democracy Dies in Darkness

In the galleries: The past invades the present in paintings by Gregory Ferrand

By Mark Jenkins December 14 at 6:38 PM



Gregory Ferrand's "Nothing Lasts Forever (and That's Okay)," on view at Adah Rose Gallery. (Gregory Ferrand/Adah Rose Gallery)

To judge from their fashions, hairstyles and settings, Gregory Ferrand's paintings depict a realm where Dwight Eisenhower is still president. Yet one of the pictures in the artist's "It Is You (and Me Too)" portrays a man staring in shock at his cellphone, trying to

process the news from election night 2016. The past and the present cohabit, and those aren't the only dimensions that overlap in this Adah Rose Gallery show.

This selection's exemplary painting is "I Had a Dream You Were Done," which juxtaposes three planes of existence in the same moment and the same house: a kitchen bathed in a warm orange glow, a living room dominated by maroon and a make-out scene on a porch in purple dusk. If the dramatically lighted scenario resembles a three-part stage set, that might be because Ferrand has worked as an illustrator for several local theater companies.

Yet the artist's intent is not to stage his artworks like one-act plays. Rather, he writes, he seeks to convey "the feeling and reality of being disconnected and alienated (which results in multiple personal realities)."

The contemporary and retro elements are unified by Ferrand's detailed compositions, precise rendering and graphic-novel style, which suggests Charles Burns if he turned from pen-and-ink to acrylic paint. Existential crises aside, the paintings are wry and packed with witty asides. In the show's title picture, rifle-toting kids and parents line up at a carnival-sideshow shooting gallery; fireworks explode in the background; and a cat is curled up next to a whiskey bottle under the counter. The drowsy feline stands in for so many things that might be just out of view.

Gregory Ferrand: It Is You (and Me Too) *Through Jan. 5 at Adah Rose Gallery, 3766 Howard Ave., Kensington, Md. 301-922-0162. adahrosegallery.com.*