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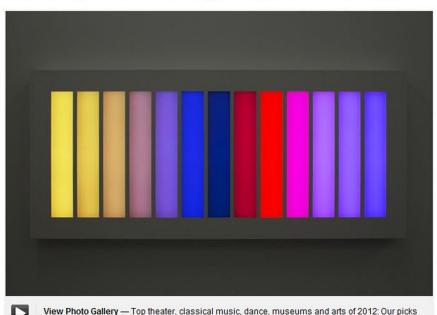








Washington's best art gallery shows of 2012



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for this year's standouts

Picasso & Matisse: Models & Muses 1906-1956

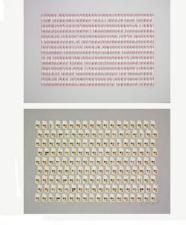
April 21-May 25 at Neptune Fine Art



(Courtesy Colby Caldwell and Hemphill Fine Arts) -Colby Caldwell's "Untitled [yellow].

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The principal theme of this print show, unsurprisingly, was the female form, generally undraped. But the selection of mostly black-and-white works by two modern masters known for color was also a celebration of line, supple and straightforward. The simplest Matisses conveyed their subjects with just a few strokes, while the Picassos employed multiple styles in a single piece. Either way, not a gesture was superfluous.

Bill Mould: Spirit and Enigma

April 4-29 at Touchstone Gallery

This Washington ceramicist neatly balanced modern technique and classical themes. He shaped clay in unusually thin layers, so it was easily accepted as being fabric, parchment or other foldable substances, and inscribed it with text from ancient, sometimes undeciphered languages. The works ranged from the ominous - a series of six inquisitors, including the infamous Torquemada - to the playful, evoking the lost words and vanished lives that underlie contemporary existence.

Jerzy Janiszewski

Dec. 9, 2011-Jan. 29 at Charles Krause/Reporting Fine Art

Among the many artists with a graphicdesign background who showed here this vear, Janiszewski may have the most interesting story. He designed the logo for Poland's Solidarity movement and later had to flee to Spain. This show included one poster from the period, which had been buried to protect it during the anti-Solidarity crackdown, as well as elegant collages made from such elementary ingredients as

Barcelona Metro tickets or strips from inside the tops of Marlboro packages.

Leo Villareal: New Work

May 12-June 30 at Conner Contemporary Art, now Connersmith

Marcel Duchamp, the godfather of conceptual art, dismissed what he called "retinal" art, which appealed foremost to the eye. Villareal's recent work was retinal with a vengeance, its colored lights flowing in emulation of 1960s color-field paintings. The conceptual underpinnings of the LED- and computer-based "paintings" have been much debated, but what's inarguable is the visual appeal. His newer pieces were less kinetic than "Multiverse" - whose white pinpoints pulse and twinkle in the tunnel between the National Gallery's two buildings - but they were warmer and more involving.



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