

Create Escape

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By Roberta Fallon rfallon@philadelphiaweekly.com

In the world of visual art, kinetic sculpture is like the kindergartner in a room full of grown-ups—loud, rambunctious and ready to have a good time. Delaware Center for the Contemporary Art's anniversary show, "SHIFT: Kinetic Sculptures," is a perfect example. Eight artists—

including Philadelphia's Tim Belknap—present works using electronics, motors, compressed air, water and found objects (including a trash container, a motorcycle and cow bones). The works may remind you of children's toys or mad science experiments. Belknap's water-filled trash container feels like a bathtub where small battleships fight to the death while Dennis Beach's *Flow* depicts a 3-D flow chart using clear acrylic tubing, water and compressed air. Whether the works

are music to your ears or a cacophony, the show is a great reminder that many artists have roots as dabblers creating messes and having fun.

Andro Linklater, best known as the author of American Revolutionary War books, has a new book about a rascally and sometimes traitorous general, James Wilkinson. Linklater reads from *An Artist in Treason: The Extraordinary Double Life of General James Wilkinson* at the American Philosophical Society Museum Library. Wilkinson—who was the youngest general in the Continental Army and a trusted aide to Benedict Arnold—was a double dealer with a moral compass as wayward as his actions. While he saves the country from Arnold's treacherous plot, he later becomes a secret agent for Spain but then saves the U.S. (again!) from the traitorous plot of Aaron Burr.

Hiraki Sawa's video animation *Eight Minutes* delivers a lyrical dreamscape in eight vignettes with a cast of ponies galloping through domestic Surrealist tableaux. Sawa's silent black and white video places toy horses throughout London, including in Sawa's home. The little herd swims through water in a bathroom sink, gallops around a kitchen sink, runs up and around the glass closure of a front-loading dryer and fords a stream in a diorama-like setting where the horses are dwarfed by a nearby mountain goat. The juxtaposition of the animals with the domestic landscape may seem jokey at first, but there's something lonely about the displaced animals that turns the piece into a melancholy reverie about not fitting in. Check it out at **Screening**, the dedicated video

space inside **Vox Populi**.

The **Wexler Gallery** and the **Clay Studio** both showcase works about the human condition. Kiki Smith's sphinx, an *Alice in Wonderland*-like tabletop sculpture and Melanie Bilenker's jewelry pieces are notable



Body builder: Peep Christina West's *Green Man* at the Clay Studio this month.

in Wexler's four-woman show "The Self & Beyond." Drawn with her own hair, Bilenker's works reference Victorian mourning jewelry, or cameos, and are beautiful depictions of the artist in domestic situations. Christina West is one of the artists featured in "Former Firsts" at the Clay Studio, a roundup of winners from the gallery's annual graduate artist shows. Her life-sized painted clay figures of nude or partially-clothed people in odd situations suggest games or child's play with a darker twist. ■

For more on the Philadelphia art scene go to theartblog.org

"SHIFT: Kinetic Sculptures": Through Nov. 19. Reception: Fri., Oct. 2, 5-9pm. Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts, 200 S. Madison St., Wilmington, Del. 302.656.6466. thedcca.org

Hiraki Sawa: **"Eight Minutes"**: Through Nov. 1. Screening Video, 319 N. 11th St., third fl. 267.918.8158. screeningvideo.org

Andro Linklater: **An Artist in Treason: The Extraordinary Double Life of General James Wilkinson**. Fri., Oct. 2, 5:30pm. American Philosophical Society Museum, Benjamin Franklin Hall, 427 Chestnut St. 215.440.3400. amphilsoc.org

"The Self & Beyond": Through Oct. 31. Reception: Fri., Oct. 2, 5-8pm. Wexler Gallery, 205 N. Third St. 215.923.7030. wexlergallery.com

"Former Firsts": Oct. 2-Nov. 1. Reception: Fri., Oct. 2, 5-9pm. Clay Studio, 139 N. Second St. 215.925.3453. theclaystudio.org