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Trawick Prize

If the cash awarded annually to winners of the Trawick Prize came from public funds, skeptics of both government and contemporary art might howl. But the \$14,000, given for the past eight years, is provided by Carol Trawick, a Montgomery County arts patron. Her longtime focus is Bethesda, and the survey of this year's finalists is at that neighborhood's Artery Plaza Gallery. The competition is open, however, to residents from the entire region. This year's winner, who earned \$10,000, is Mia Feuer of the District; runners-up hail from Baltimore and Richmond.

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Feuer's "The Cairo Tower Collapses/A Fishing Boat in Alexandria Is Constructed" is monumental yet conceptual. It's a swirling pileup of plastics — styrofoam, fiberglass and polyurethane, among others — that contains Egyptian indigo powder and water from the Nile. It's echoed by Marty Weishaar's "Bridge Project," another large assemblage, which is heavy on spray foam and duct tape. Both pieces teeter, a little awkwardly, between ambitious form and everyday materials.

There's also a conceptual angle to Caryl Burtner's work, which took second place, and indeed to most of the other pieces. Burtner offers 52 page-a-day calendar



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(/ Copyright Judy Taylor) - Reproductions of the 11 panels of Judy Taylor's "Labor Mural," which Maine Gov. Paul LePage had taken down from the state's Labor Department building in March, are currently on display at VisArts Rockville's Kaplan Gallery.

sheets, each dated Friday the 13th and recounting one day's events. "Friday the 13th" is supplemented by "The Caryl Burtner Archives," a collection of scrapbooks. Nearby, Warren Craighead III shows pages from his handmade books, and offers pages (and scissors and a stapler) for anyone who wants to build his own.

Books and calendars seem old-fashioned these days, but they're more modern than Michelle Rogers's inspiration: sepia-toned antique postcards. The artist assembles beguiling triptychs that match one postcard with two of her own toned-silver prints, whose look simulates the card's age. Subjects include St. Malo, a rock lighthouse in Cork and a massive Montana copper smelter. Each three-view set include one in

which someone wears a bowler hat, and Rogers has hung the hat at the end of the sequence, where it evokes both Magritte and Chaplin. In an ideally conceptual world, gallery-goers could put the hat on and be transported into the silvery past.

More coolly contemporary are Lillian Bayley-Hoover's paintings and Sofia Silva and Adam Davies's photographs, all of which depict near-featureless human-made landscapes. Davies's large-print images contrast nature with concrete and steel barriers. Silva observes the repetitive architectural templates of sheds and garages, and shoots suburban back yards through a white fence that obscures most of what's beyond. Bayley-Hoover's view of Istanbul's Ataturk Airport shows mostly tarmac. Cairo, Brittany and Istanbul – the 11 contenders for 2011's Trawick Prize are clearly a well-traveled bunch. Yet their art doesn't manifest a particular place so much as reflects its time.

Jenkins is a freelance writer.

Celebrate Labor: Where Art and Politics Meet

on view through Sept. 20 at VisArts Kaplan Gallery, 155 Gibbs St., Rockville, 301-315-8200, www.visartscenter.org.

Trawick Prize

on view through Sept. 30 at Artery Plaza Gallery, 7200 Wisconsin Ave., Bethesda, www.bethesda.org/bethesda/trawick-prize.

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