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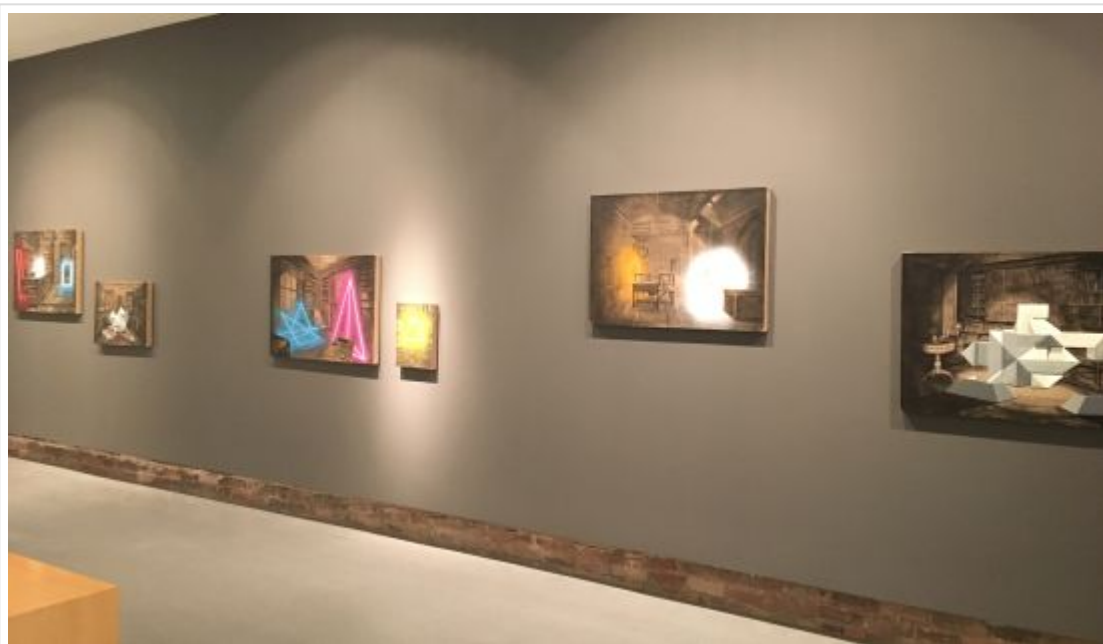
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## REVIEWS

# East City Art Reviews: *Material/Ethereal* at Hamiltonian Gallery



By Eric Hope on May 19, 2016

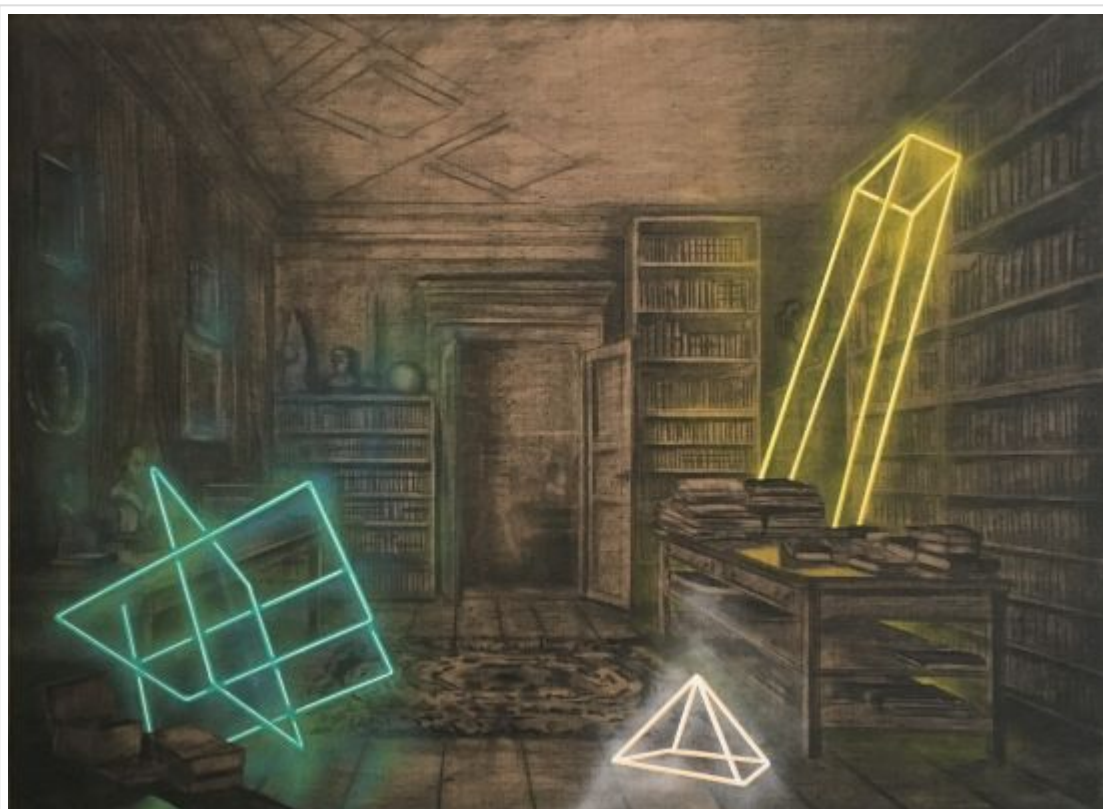


New works by Alejandro Pintado at Hamiltonian Gallery.  
Photo for East City Art by Eric Hope.

What defines a landscape? Is it rolling hills or a copse of oaks flanking the fixed horizon of a sunrise or sunset? The rocky crags of mountain ranges stretching vertically from surrounding grasslands? Landscape as a genre has come to be defined chiefly by what the eyes connote, but what happens when we remove our eyes from the equation? What will our minds “see” when forced to rely on other senses?

input? *Material/Ethereal*, currently on view at Hamiltonian Gallery, effectively attempts to kick start that train of thought with works that defy our preconceived notions of how landscapes ought to behave. Dan Perkins and Alejandro Pintado seek to disrupt our very ideas of how the space around us is shaped by our perceptions, utilizing both geometry and geography as tools of mass (visual) destruction to a thrilling effect.

Though Alejandro Pintado's home base has changed (he's recently relocated back to his native Mexico City from DC), his interest in how we perceive our environment through multiple dimensions has not wavered. A 2014 East City Art [profile](#) documented Pintado's long-standing interest in how the invisible passage of time influences our perceptions of reality via manipulations of antique landscape prints. Building upon that theme is a new body of work that moves from the panoramic expanse of gardens and prairies to personal, inner sanctums. The backdrops of Pintado's unprimed canvases feature home libraries rendered in charcoal that cast hazy shadows across the rooms. There is an unfinished quality to the interiors (portraits over mantles are unrecognizable and book spines are left unprinted) and the viewer is left with the impression of gazing into an upper-class, gentleman's library in an era before electricity.



*Collecting Ideas*, 2016

Alejandro Pintado

charcoal and acrylic on linen

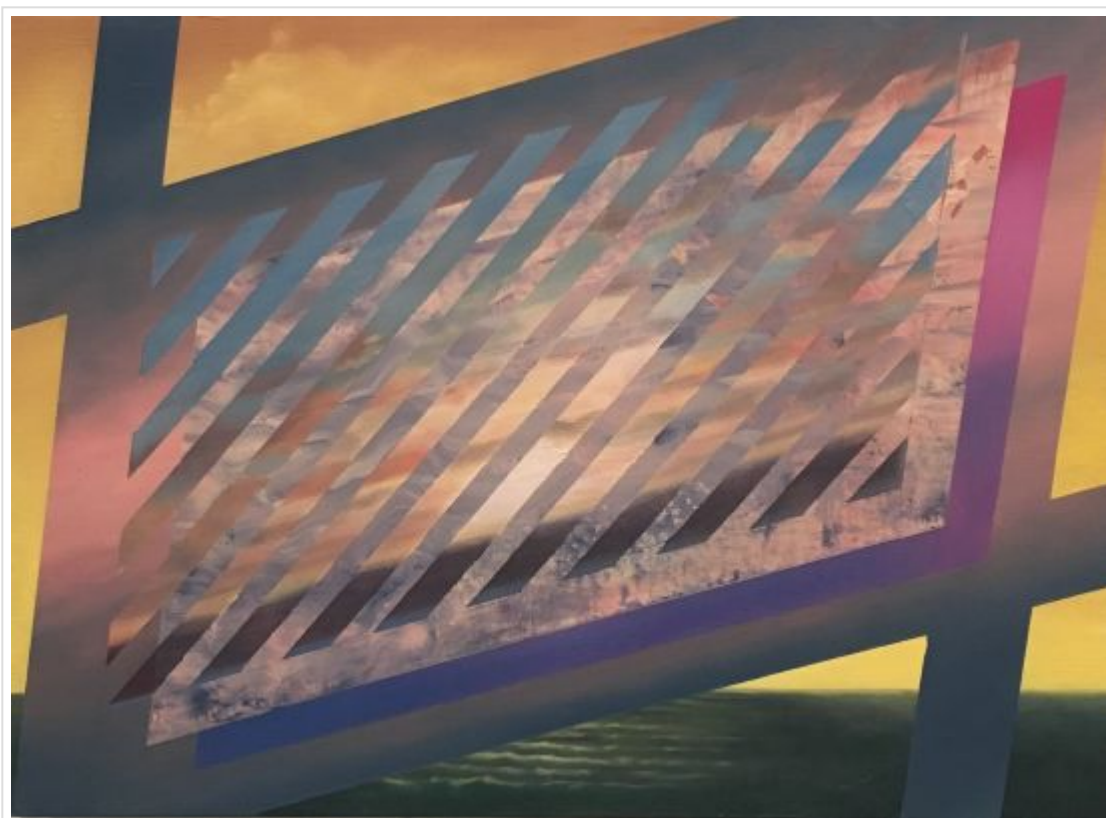
44 x 60 inches

Photo for East City Art by Eric Hope.

The moody backdrops quickly give way to inserted geometric forms of raw color that glow white-hot before fading to primary reds, blues or yellows. In works such as *After Faraday* and *Illumination* the

geometric forms shimmer electrically in the air. In other pieces, such as *Mathematical Model at Goethe's Place*, the forms appear less electric but no less alien within the confines of the room. The works' titles give us important clues to Pintado's thoughts; the backdrops are modeled after the studies of famous scientists and the visual apparitions are representations of their scientific theories. While the private spaces are rendered as ethereal backdrops from centuries past, the shapes read as 21st century laser zaps or auto-CAD inspired constructions. Where earlier works focused on the outward passage of time through wide-open landscapes, these works bring that tension inward to reflect on how the passage of time impacts our private spaces and moments. It is a constant force, shaping how we understand and react to the world around us, yet it doesn't have to be threatening or nefarious. Pintado posits that it can be warm-hued and gentle as well.

Current Hamiltonian fellow Dan Perkins' vibrant landscapes present a compelling counterpoint to Pintado's more insular, slightly moody works. Where Pintado focuses on domestic interiors, Perkins' works feature landscapes as viewed through a prism held out a car window while driving 90 miles an hour down the highway. What whips past our eyes are glimpses of treed terrain but what mostly stands out are the heavens, where blue skies are punctuated by fluffy clouds and an ethereal sun plays second fiddle to the colors of the atmosphere.



*Float*, 2016  
Dan Perkins  
oil on canvas  
16 x 22 inches

Photo for East City Art by Eric Hope.

Perkins too utilizes geometry to influence his storytelling, with works that build upon the narrative he laid out in his [2015 Hamiltonian show](#). While, large works such as *A Mountain* and *Always On* feature recognizable vistas framed by geometric bands of color (similar to his last 2015 Hamiltonian show), most pieces here display a landscape so chopped, incised or pixelated as to be almost unrecognizable. Works such as *In Parallel* and *New Dusk* present geometric swaths of pink, yellow and blue that suggest how other wavelengths of light might present a wildly divergent view of the same expanse. *Lattice*, *Screen Glow* and *Split Phaser* take us to whole new dimensions as we stare “through the landscape into what lies beyond. Each of these interruptions—from abrupt manipulations of border through to pure geometric reductions—suggest that the world we inhabit is so much bigger than just the features our eyes alone discern.

The dialogue created between these two artists’ work is richest I’ve seen in a DC-metro exhibition in recent memory. Though each approaches this notion of a “parallel space” from a different perspective (interior versus exterior; personal versus universal), they travel down overlapping paths. The communion between these two painters goes beyond their similar use of primary colors or upending the pictorial plane. Indeed, their intertwined interest in exploring our understanding of the universe built upon the visualization of space examined by Minimalist artists of the 20th century. This inter-generational linkage is most obvious in Pintado’s works such as *Living Room Idea* and *Where Abstraction Meets*—two works whose neon bolts of color directly reference the fluorescent light work of Dan Flavin. Perkins similarly references Donald Judd’s Plexiglas stacks in works such as *Mirror Blind* and *Night Fade*, further adding a pop sensibility in pieces such as *Split Screen* and *Always On* that recall roadside billboards.

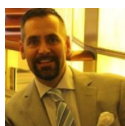


Dan Perkins includes both small and large-scale works in this exhibition.  
Photo for East City Art by Eric Hope.

In this regard, both artists freely associate with history even as they blaze paths to the future. They suggest that how we experience the world around us cannot be defined solely by what our eyes take in

any given moment. Rather, our understanding of our environment—and our position within it—is also colored (perhaps literally) by the unseen passage of time and the unknowable developments of the future. These time currents interact simultaneously in Pintado’s works to somewhat destabilizing effect as Star Trek laser beams pulse through Edwardian interiors. Perkins’ pastel color palette may soften these similar discordancies, yet even here our eyes still discern only the tip of his iceberg. In the end, each artist, in their own way, implores us to look with our hearts—not just our eyes.

*Material/Ethereal runs through June 18th at Hamiltonian Gallery in Washington, DC. For more information, visit their website [here](#).*



### Authored by: **Eric Hope**

Eric Hope is a curator and writer based in Brookland. He moved to Washington DC in 1997 and a twist of fate found him a volunteer marketing job at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden. In 2009, after ten years of marketing work at large museums in DC he moved into the realm of curating, staging a variety of solo, duo and small-group shows for the Evolve Urban Arts Project. He currently freelances as a curator and writes about local artists and the DC arts scene for a variety of online publications. Originally from Missouri, Hope holds degrees in International Relations and Public Service Administration from DePaul University in Chicago.

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