



Last Friday, I had the pleasure of experiencing the new artwork that lives inside of the Honfleur Gallery. Courtesy of Arie Mandelbaum and Katherine Tzu-Lan Mann, I was given the opportunity to interpret and imagine through two distinctive collections. Upon entering the gallery, I was brought into the mind of Mandelbaum in his “Love and Rage” exhibition. A six-week residency in Anacostia produced 13 large-scale works, which captured his analysis of his surrounding environment.

Mandelbaum’s pieces evoke soft simplicity from a distance. However, as I approached each canvas, I soon began to read the stories that were painted through the eyes of the artist. Mandelbaum was able to take his exploration of the neighborhood and eloquently translate its complexities, beauty and struggles in his work.

As a native Washingtonian, it was refreshing to see the view of Anacostia from an outsider. In a brief interview, Mandelbaum shared with me how he was cautioned of the territory upon his arrival. He was specifically told to be safe during the nighttime hours. However, this came as a shock because throughout his residency, his new neighbors were very courteous and friendly, day and night. Further, Mandelbaum explained that he would actually prefer to visit Anacostia, as opposed to downtown Washington, which he deems too conventional.

Through his pieces like *In the Metro Station*, *On the Bus* and *The Boat*, he was able to sufficiently capture this historical side of town.

After speaking with Mandelbaum in the gallery, I eased my way upstairs to discover Tzu-Lan Mann’s “Unquiet Kingdom.” What awaited me was much more than I had anticipated. In agreeance with other spectators, I too believed her work was exciting. It



was “in your face.” It was bold and beautiful.

There was no way to get around the decorative patterns that fashioned her paintings. She strategically used each angle of her space to accentuate her technique. Thus, her pieces effortlessly crawled up the walls, dangled from the ceilings and landed into the imaginations of her audience.

The artist herself describes her work best when she says, “My paintings are utter hybrids; man-sized fields punctuated by moments of absurdity, poetry, mutation, growth and decay that I find both suffocating and fabulous.”

Honfleur’s decision to feature the work of an abstract painter from Polish-Jewish upbringing and a local graduate and professor at the Maryland Institute of Art was ingenious.

The balance of abstract and fairy-tale complemented one another well. I would urge all art connoisseurs and mere novices, like myself, to visit Honfleur to view these exhibitions that will be on display through October 26, 2012. You just might see me there again!