

The Washington Post

November 28, 2019 at 7:00 a.m. EST

In the galleries: At American University Museum, a world of atmosphere

By **Mark Jenkins**

The atmosphere is humid at the American University Museum, where Christine Neill, Pam Rogers, Lynn Sures and Mel Watkin are showing botanically inspired art.



“Disappearing Cavendish” (2017) by Christine Neill. Watercolor and archival ink print on paper and framing Plexiglas. Courtesy of Goya Contemporary)

In another age, Christine Neill might have spent her career celebrating nature’s beauty. There’s much of that in her “Observations From the Valley Floor,” but these delicate yet vigorous mixed-media pictures also contain intimations of disaster. Among the exemplary pieces are depictions of the fatal bleaching of coral reefs and the damage done by invasive insect species.

Neill combines traditional drawing, printmaking and watercolor painting with contemporary devices and techniques. She often uses Plexiglas to position imagery on multiple levels, and sometimes laser-cuts paper to yield details such as actual perforations in bug-chewed leaves. The precision of the renderings contrasts looser gestures and the lush pileup of overlapping elements. Nature is under attack in Neill’s pictures, but still teeming.