

WASHINGTON CITYPAPER

City Lights: *Alien Nation* or Alienation?

Kenta Murakami unites 12 artists investigating the alien among and within us at von ammon co.

DORA SEGALL IN ARTS | 30 JUN 21



Anyone who's been to von ammon co. knows the gallery is a shock of contemporary grit in quaint, historic Georgetown. *Alien Nation* adheres to von ammon's cutting edge reputation while venturing into new territory—the exhibition, put together by Kenta Murakami, is the gallery's first ever to be guest curated and one of few to feature works from numerous artists. Thematically, the exhibition is rooted in the writing of Sylvia Wynter. Playing off of the Jamaican philosopher's anti-colonial critiques of humanism and of Western-dominated evolution narratives, it, in the words of von ammon co.'s website, "looks to artists who are investigating the ways alienation is internalized and how the inhumane mechanisms of our society are

overlaid with human skin.” The artists do so through a wide range of media and discursive perspectives. At the back of the room, a lamp sags with deflated layers of fabric—a decaying remnant of Colette’s *Living Environment* exhibition from the early 1980s. Forward and to the left of it, an assemblage of drill bits, a Polaroid camera, and what look like bullets compose a sort of terrifying swing set. The installation, by sculptor Kayode Ojo, captures serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer’s dual struggle to embrace (by joining the army) and violently reject American values. The constellation of styles reflected in these and in other pieces is fitting for the theme: Alienation exists in all corners of Western life, and it does so in infinite ways.

‘*ALIEN NATION*’ runs 20 June - 1 August 2021