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Because contemporary “starchitects” design museums that upstage their contents, it’s only fair for artists to trespass on architecture’s turf by making pieces that are essentially places. Such public spaces can be keyed to the actions of their inhabitants, as is demonstrated by Jacob Kassay’s “X,” at Von Ammon Co. Aloofly minimalist yet interactive, the New York artist’s “X” comprises 10 near-identical canvases, electroplated all over with mirror-like silver, and the track lighting above. The latter is controlled by a sensor that reacts to a low-tech catalyst: a burning candle. When the gallery is nearly still, the flame is steady. But when visitors move, the resulting air currents make it flicker, causing the illumination to stutter and the paintings to flash. The bigger the crowd, the wilder the light show.

“X” may refer to the Roman numeral for the number of electroplated rectangles, each placed at an angle to the structural column to which it’s attached. (The arrangement is regular and off-kilter at the same time.) The title might also indicate an unseen element in the installation’s feedback loop: air itself, or the people who disrupt it. Kassay defines the gallery’s space, but he wants that definition to be as transient as a candle’s glimmer.

By coating canvases with silver, Kassay invokes analog photography, a concern of Patrick Harkin as well. The Richmond artist’s Hamiltonian Gallery show, “Harvester’s Dilemma,” also plays with light, interactivity and silvered surfaces.

For this show, the gallery is nearly dark, illuminated mostly by a screen that displays white-on-black video and two industrial lights. Motorized winches propel the caged bulbs into and out of oil drums, a journey accompanied by buzzing, throbbing noises. These clash with burbling nature sounds from the photographically reversed video, in which an iguana navigates a bamboo stalk.

Some of these motifs are familiar from Harkin’s previous Hamiltonian show, whose ecological message was more explicit. What’s new is Harkin’s technique of printing high-contrast images on fabric embedded with microcrystal lenses. The resulting pictures are virtually unreadable by the naked eye, but reveal themselves when photographed with a flash. A camera is necessary to discern the work, but then nearly everybody carries one these days.

According to a gallery note, Harkin has “a contentious relationship with photography” and his goal is to challenge the viewer’s casual acceptance of photographic imagery. But there’s not much to see here without a flash-enabled camera. The device is both Harkin’s nemesis and his ally.