



First Fridays exhibits Charlottesville's art scene's art scene on First Fridays

Once a month, galleries open their doors to both students and townspeople for this local tradition

by Emily Hagan and Kristen Sprano

Can't get enough art at U.Va.? Dying to impress that girl in your art history discussion or that boy in studio? Itching to live life like a local? Grab a friend and find your way to the downtown mall for First Fridays -- a hallmark of the Charlottesville art scene where families, professors, students and locals converge. On the first Friday of every month, local galleries reveal their latest shows to the community. They use the event to meet and greet with artists, promote and sell their art and socialize with art aficionados over tasty hors d'oeuvres and local wine. By consolidating openings, galleries see substantial boosts in attendance, regularly boasting anywhere from 200-900 visitors. For a first-time attendee, it can be a bit overwhelming. We're here to give you a brief play-by-play on how best to maneuver your way around. Begin on Water Street and 5th, where you will find the recently-opened Migration. Greeted at the door by Piper, the husband-and-wife team's charming dog, visitors enjoy the welcoming space with punch, cheese and an exclusive selection of 20 artists from across the states. Currently exhibiting "Film Photography Now" with artists Peter Filene and Alan Dehmer, Migration is small but significant. We loved the friendly welcome and Filene's photographic overlay of a Van Gogh sketch. Next, continue down Water Street, and stop by Second Street Gallery, a longstanding pillar of the C-Ville art scene. Its space recalls a modern New York aesthetic and appropriately is exhibiting New York-artist Anna Gaskell's "Everything That Rises," a series of large-scale photographs and "Eraser," a gripping video installation narrated by 12-year-old girls. We loved the smiling U.Va. interns and gourmet spread. On the next block is Les

Yeux du Monde, a multi-level space that also displays jewelry, books, furniture and local crafts. Running in conjunction with the U.Va. Art Museum's "Complicit," the gallery highlights Martha Saunders and U.Va. media studies professor Johanna Drucker. We liked the hustle and bustle around 7 p.m., but for a more peaceful experience, err on the earlier side. Next change gears a bit, cross the Downtown Mall and visit the McGuffey Arts Center, an elementary school-turned-education center on the corner of 2nd and Market. McGuffey displays juried art in its vast hallways. Different from the other venues, the large space is less of a gallery and more of a co-operative arts scene. Artists' studios punctuate this month's featured works of the Charlottesville Watercolor Guild. We liked peeking in on the works-in-progress and the Polynesian dancing. Finish off your art excursion with dinner on the Downtown Mall or make your way back to Grounds. Stop by BozArt and the U.Va. student/faculty Off-Grounds Gallery, which we missed (but you should not). Whether you're an art master or a relative newbie, leave the comfort zone of U.Va. and follow our guide to enjoy new art, great food and Charlottesville community. First Fridays runs from 5:30 to 7:30 the first Friday of every month.

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