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Afaf Zurayk at Foundry

"As a child I lived in a house with no doors," writes Afaf Zurayk in a poem accompanying her exhibition of small works on paper at Foundry Gallery. The house was in Beirut, and it provides the landscape of memories for her series "Dream Doors," rendered in ink, crayon and watercolor. Zurayk, who has lived in Washington since 1983, traces the difficult journey between two worlds in an array of tiny, often cryptic images that fill each work. Omnipresent black keyholes doom the dream of a "house with no doors," replacing it with a sense of alienation. Hovering in the midst of these spidery line drawings is a solitary figure outlined in black ink. Zurayk's skillful manipulation of china ink over large areas of the paper helps convey the mood of these works but leads her away from her greatest strength as an artist. "Recollections," her series of 18 small works, is a striking display of her considerable ability as a colorist. In each of these pieces, an oval face is almost imperceptible beneath a blizzard of multicolored gestural strokes in chalk and oil pastels and black ink. The mood is somewhat more somber in this series, conveying the artist's inner struggles. But out of that darkness, Zurayk's brilliant color bears witness to the brighter hope of tomorrow.

Robin Purnell, at Mahler, 406 Seventh St. NW, to July 17.

Dale Zuehlke, at Henri, 1500 21st St. NW, to July 13.

Afaf Zurayk, at Foundry, 9 Hillyer Ct. NW, to June 27.