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JERRY CULLUM MAY 26, 2022

The title of *Is it not enough that I smile in the valleys?* (at Whitespace, Whitespec, Shedspace and Take It Easy through June 18) comes from an imagined monologue in Henry David Thoreau's *The Maine Woods*, in which Mother Nature reminds the unwary visitor that not all the spaces of nature are welcoming to humanity. Take It Easy gallery curators Corey Oberlander, Jamie Steele and Lindsey Stapleton began with the premise that we still romanticize nature, even when we pay little attention to it most of the time except as a grand concept of the Great Outdoors contrasted with the nature we ignore all around us.

The dozen artists they have chosen for this multi-venue exhibition explore the several ways in which our society experiences artificial or engineered versions of nature. Sanitized or mediated landscapes, for example, appear in Vesna Pavlović's 2017 photo *Jardines de Hershey, Jibacoa, Cuba I* and Stephanie Dowda DeMer's 2019-2021 laser etchings from photo negatives, *The Future Is Another Transaction* and *Two Or Less Possibilities*. These two artists have very different ways of presenting images of nature transmuted into art.

Fly fishing is one of the few occasions when artfully composed objects are an intrinsic part of bending nature to human will. Michi Meko's elegantly designed fishing lures from 2022 are presented in well-lit wall boxes like the works of art that they are, under the general title *Black Deceiver Flies*.

Dr. Jerry Cullum's reviews and essays have appeared in Art Papers magazine, Raw Vision, Art in America, ARTnews, International Journal of African-American Art and many other popular and scholarly journals. In 2020 he was awarded the Rabkin Prize for his outstanding contribution to arts journalism.