

**Kermit Berg**  
**Tokyo Night Office**  
**Gallery plan B, Washington, D.C. October/November 2011**

**Reviews:**

# The Washington Post

## **Aggressively contemporary and historic art at Gallery plan b**

**By Mark Jenkins, Published: November 3**

Aside from being teeming, Mumbai and Tokyo don't have much in common. Neither, it might seem, do the city-inspired works of Kermit Berg and Delna Dastur, which face each other on the walls of [Gallery plan b](#). Berg's photographic collages and Dastur's mixed-media "drawings" on canvas both riff on patterns and grids, and both have a specific geographic identity. But Berg's "Tokyo Night Office" is aggressively contemporary — there are no temples, kabuki or geisha in his neon-lit Tokyo — while Dastur's "Encroachment" draws on centuries of Indian culture.

Berg, who lives in Berlin and San Francisco, is not the first outsider to see Tokyo as an empire of signs. Japan's capital is crowded with text, and Berg makes Photoshop combinations of subway maps, ad posters and neon logos, all in mash-ups of Chinese characters, Roman letters and Japanese syllabaries. He layers images in ways that range from witty to nearly abstract. The playful "Lemon Tea" conflates a lineup of beverages in one of the city's ubiquitous vending machines with the workers behind windows in an office building; both are products on display in a consumer wonderland.



The photographer, who's had transit-themed shows in New York and Berlin, is drawn to Tokyo's subway and commuter train system, whose basic design is comprehensible to any urbanite. But Berg doesn't show the throngs for which the city's trains and stations are famed. Instead, he focuses on motifs and colors, turning twists of green neon into abstract lines and glorying in the contrast between night skies and vivid artificial light. (The underlying photographs were probably made before the Fukushima nuclear power-plant meltdown led to Tokyo's dimming.) The most striking of these pictures is the near-abstract "Red Square," a swoosh of black and a burst of green on a hot red field. It could be anything, but it feels like Tokyo.

Dastur's work is gentler. The artist, who divides her time between Mumbai and the District, draws on fabric design and Mughal illustrated manuscripts.

Although one canvas is titled "Urban Dominance," these works are not overbearing. Indeed, the most cited thing about them is their lack of green. The artist prefers blues, reds and blacks, which she often adorns with gold leaf (another reference to Persian-style books). She builds honeycombed grids with wooden Indian textile stamps, layers gels, gessos and pastels over acrylic washes and finishes it off with charcoal. These cityscapes may not be bustling — there are no people, save for a few sequestered Mughal lovers in "Secret Affairs" — but their depths suggest the cultural archaeology of a place built from multiple civilizations.



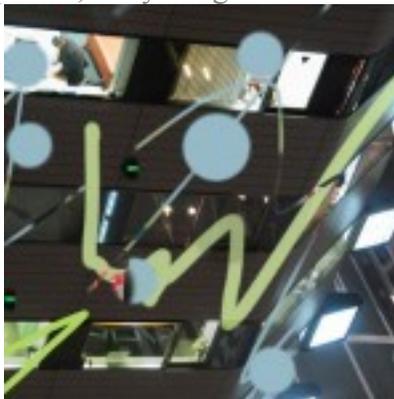
## FW partner Spotlight: Gallery plan b Posted on November 6, 2011 by admin



White Lanterns, Tokyo Night Office series, Kermit Berg



GreenSpheres, Tokyo Night Office Series, Kermit Berg



GreenChairs, Tokyo Night Office Series, Kermit Berg

Kermit Berg makes a return appearance at Gallery plan b during FotoWeek. Three years after his work Economic Miracle was shown in 2008, his multi-layered photographs in Tokyo Night Office recall neon-inspired memories of time spent in Tokyo while referencing the city's vulnerability and strength.

As described by curator Laura Gilbert, "Kermit Berg's light creates a separate, emotionally remote place. His photographs depict natural light streaming into what might be termed contemporary urban cathedrals." In his current portfolio, Tokyo Night Office, the vast stretches of fluorescent lighting indoors and the neon lighting outdoors in Tokyo have been a powerful influence. The vibrancy of colors in the Tokyo streetscape is inescapable and affords him the opportunity to expand his palette from the muted and monochromatic tones previously preferred by him. In addition, Berg adds, the vibrancy of Tokyo's inhabitants inspired his return to dynamic multi-image layering of photographs. One work, Black Facade, is intentionally dimmed in respect for the great natural and man-made tragedies that followed his experience in Tokyo. But the city retains its tenacity and he chose to finish the first group of prints with the vital energy emanating from "White Lanterns".

Gallery plan b

1530 14th Street NW, Washington, DC

Exhibition Dates: October 22 through November 20, 2011

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**CITY PAPER**

# ARTSDESK

## Reviewed: Kermit Berg and Delna Dastur at Gallery Plan B

Posted by [Louis Jacobson](#) on Oct. 31, 2011 at 9:15 am



For Kermit Berg, an artist based in Berlin and San Francisco, the "vast stretches of fluorescent lighting indoors and neon lighting outdoors in Tokyo have been a powerful influence." That's clear from "Tokyo Night Office," an exhibit at Gallery Plan B featuring works that are clearly photo-based but otherwise leave their multilayered technique obscure. Most of the images are bursting with energy, melding such far-flung imagery as train maps, vending machine contents, advertising, endless walls of office-building windows and simple squiggles of color. But the calmer, less complex images are most appealing—a blocky arrangement of orange and black with a splotch of green that looks like a police-car light; a dark black space punctuated by blue neon lettering and geometrical green shapes; and one muted work that's "intentionally dimmed" to honor the victims of this year's natural and man-made

disasters in Japan. Also on view: mixed media works on canvas by Delna Dastur, an artist based in northern Virginia and Mumbai, India, whose abstractions toy with cubism, Islamic art, and decorative themes.

The exhibition is on view 12 to 7 p.m. Wednesday to Saturday and 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday to Nov. 20 at Gallery Plan B, 1530 14th St. NW. (202) 234-2711.



# The List for Oct. 27

By: [Examiner Staff Writer](#) | 10/26/11 8:05 PM

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## Best Galleries

1. Dan Flavin's "untitled (to Helga and Carlo, with respect and affection)"...

Where: Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden, Seventh Street and Independence Avenue SW

When: Through January 2012...

2. The Black List: Photographs by Timothy Greenfield-Sanders: ...

Where: National Portrait Gallery, Eighth and F streets NW

When: Through April 2012...

3. Tokyo Night Office: Photography by Kermit Berg: Berg's intimate, almost incriminating photographs captures the nocturnal life of buildings in a city of rampant workaholism -- rather like this one.

Where: Gallery plan b, 1530 14th St. NW

When: Through Nov. 20

Info: Free; [galleryplanb.com](http://galleryplanb.com)

4. KABAROV: ...

Where: Hemphill, 1515 14th St. NW

When: Closing Saturday...

5. Proximity to Practice: ...

Where: Arlington Arts Center, 3550 Wilson Blvd., Arlington

When: Through Dec. 30...