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In the galleries: Mixed-media ceramic sculptures explore African roots



An installation view of "Gathering" by Chris Malone at 355 POD Space Gallery, programmed by VisArts with support from Morguard. (Gregory R. Staley Photography)

Review by Mark Jenkins

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For sculptor Chris Malone, mosaic is as much a philosophy as a technique. He builds bodies from clay, glass, stone and found objects, suggesting complex identities he doesn't profess to understand fully. The six statues in "Gathering," on display 24/7 in the windows of the VisArts-programmed 355 Pod Space, employ motifs that evoke what Malone calls his "unsettled African self, stemming from a history I never learned properly."

Many of Malone's fanciful creations, which have often been exhibited at Zenith Gallery, have a cartoonish quality. The D.C. artist often makes full-body sculptures whose limbs are spindly and seemingly elastic. But the "Gathering" pieces are all busts of heads and shoulders that stand on, and are integrated with, built-in ceramic pedestals. With their realistic eyes, probably made of glass, the statues feel somber and ceremonial, even if playful in their use of material.

The figures have faces painted with elaborate patterns and abundant hair in the forms of such things as shells, rusted nails and pencils whose tips point outward. One head is topped with flowerlike forms that cascade down the statue's base, which is perforated with cavities, as are the subject's cheeks and chin. Another has a chest that resembles a birdcage. Such touches make Malone's mixed-media entities appear as airy as they are earthy.

Chris Malone: Gathering Through July 30 at [355 POD Space Gallery, VisArts, 355 Rockville Pike, Rockville. visartscenter.org. 301-315-8200.](#)

About the 355 POD Space Gallery

VisArts and Morguard North American Residential REIT (the REIT) have partnered to provide opportunities for local artists to bring their ideas to life with site-specific art installations at the 355 POD Space Gallery.

About Morguard North American Residential REIT

The REIT is an unincorporated, open-ended real estate investment trust established under and governed by the laws of the Province of Ontario. The Units of the REIT trade on the Toronto Stock Exchange under the ticker symbol MRG.UN. With a strategic focus on the acquisition of high-quality multi-suite residential properties in Canada and the United States, the REIT maximizes long-term Unit value through active asset and property management. The REIT's portfolio consists of apartment communities located in Alberta, Ontario, Colorado, Texas, Louisiana, Illinois, Georgia, Florida, North Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland. For more information, visit the REIT's website at www.morguard.com.

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