



PHOTOGRAPHY

Houston Is Hopping Thanks to FotoFest

By WILLIAM MEYERS

The Houston FotoFest 2010 Biennial has strewn the city with exhibitions. There are displays of photographs in more than 100 venues, many including the work of several photographers, so the variety is extraordinary.

Beatrix Reinhardt: Members Only—America ▼

RE: groups—American Photographs Before 1950
Houston Center for Photography
1441 West Alabama
Through April 25

The Houston Center for Photography sponsors classes, workshops, lectures, spot magazine, and exhibitions. One of its three FotoFest shows is Beatrix Reinhardt's large-format color photos of American private clubs. The titles give an idea of the sorts of institutions she found: "Pathfinder Gun

and Hunting Club, Fulton, NY, 2006," "Olympiakos Pireaus Fan Club, Astoria, NY, 2006" and "American Club, Beijing, China, 2005." The spaces are shot with no club members present, but Ms. Reinhardt indicates the interests that brought them together and something of their social beings. The wall of the fan club is covered with photos of the Greek soccer team; the vinyl stacking chairs and Formica tables suggest people of modest means.

Also at HCP are some American group photos taken from W.M. Hunt's "Collection Blind Pirate." Many are in crafted frames that are as much of the early 20th century as the images they hold. There is a hand-colored print of "Veteran Firemen, 1886"; they stand in military formation in downtown New York. The hooded gents in "Hanover—No. 1 (Ku Klux Klan), 1924" are arrayed in five neat rows in what might be a school assembly room. There's the "Inter City

Beauties—Showmen's Variety Jubilee, 1935," and "The Human Liberty Bell, 27,000 Officers & Men, at Camp Dix, General Hugh L. Scott CMDR, 1918," cracked, but stupendous.

Craig Mammano: A Few Square Blocks

Jane Tam: Foreigners in Paradise
FotoFest Gallery Headquarters
1113 Vine St.
Through April 25

The FotoFest Headquarters are in a landmarked and exquisitely renovated warehouse building with long corridors and empty rooms ideal for exhibitions. Craig Mammano is one of the 11 artists in a group show there, "Whatever Was Splendid: New American Photographs," curated by Aaron Schuman. Mr. Mammano's black-and-white photos are of prostitutes, black transvestites and other marginal types usually not seen in images of New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The pictures of "Paia, New Orleans, 2008," "Precious, New Orleans, 2007" and "Ce Ce, New Orleans, 2008" are brutal but affecting, in the tradition of earlier social photography. The subjects, naked or clothed, are neither condescended to nor valorized, but left for us to deal with as best we can.

Jane Tam's color photos of her family coming to grips with their lives as immigrants in New York have a very different emotional valence than Mr. Mammano's, but are also affecting. "Grandfather Helping Grandmother Up the Hill to Pick Ginkgo Nuts, 2007," "Aunt's Tin-Filled Stove Top, 2006," and the self-conscious teenager "Sara, 2008" reflect traditional Chinese family piety. Elements of the material culture surrounding the family in its Brooklyn home—even items of plastic and Styrofoam—are treated with the respect of revered household objects.

Ruptures and Continuities: Photography Made After 1960

From the MFAH Collection
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
1001 Bissonnet
Through May 9

Anne Wilkes Tucker, the MFAH's curator of photography since 1978,

established Houston as an important city for the medium. This exhibition of over 200 photographs draws on a pool of 14,000, and includes work by 80 photographers. The show begins with a startling diptych by Naoya Hatakeyama, "Blast, 2005," that puts the viewer in the midst of flying rock fragments from a dynamite explosion in a quarry. Curator Yasufumi Nakamori placed the large-format piece at the entrance of the exhibition as a metaphor for the "ruptures" in photographic practice he then explores along with photographic "continuities."

After an introductory section, Mr. Nakamori divides the works into five categories: Self-Performance, Transformation of the City, Directorial Mode and Constructed Environments, New Landscape, and Memory and Archive. Notable artists are scattered throughout, such as William Eggleston, Philip Lorca diCorcia, Victoria Sambunaris, Robert Polidori, Edward Burtynsky, and Bernd and Hilla Becher. A potent source of rupture is Conceptualism. Sol LeWitt, one of the included artists, has explained: "In conceptual art the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work. . . . all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair." These works may be interesting to think about, but perforce they are not much to look at. Continuity is represented by works such as Simon Norfolk's austere chromogenic images from war-torn Afghanistan.

The Road to Nowhere?

FotoFest at Winter Street Studios
2101 Winter St.
Through April 25

This exhibition includes series by 20 photographers curated by Natasha Egan. My least favorite is Greg Stimac's "Untitled (White Mustangs), 2008." Projected on a wall in a darkened room are three large-scale videos of a white Ford Mustang parked on a country road with its headlights on and its horn honking. The videos are projected until the headlights go out, the horn is silent and the battery is dead. This is the

avant-garde equivalent of waterboarding.

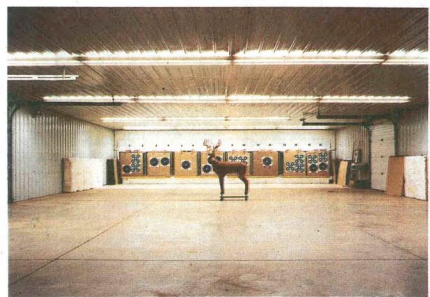
Myra Greene's series "My White Friends" features informal color portraits. "T.S. Rochester, NY, 2009" is a young man posed on a residential street with his building. The young man in "J.S. New York, NY, 2008" is sitting in the shade in an office with his feet up on a conference table; skyscrapers are visible out the window. "J.E. Chicago, IL, 2008" is a young woman leaning on a kitchen counter. Ms. Greene successfully varies her format to suit her subjects.

"Young Blood" is a series of chromogenic prints of children hunting by Erika Larsen. "Ruthie's First Kill, 2007" shows a young girl with one hand on a dead boar and the other holding a bloodied knife; her expression is unresolved. The orange caps and vests worn by the three young girls in "Pheasant Hunter, 2007" stand out against the snowy field. One girl holds a shotgun; two hold dead fowl. By and large, the children in "Young Blood" take their hunting with commendable seriousness.

Mr. Meyers writes about photography for the Journal. See his works at www.williammeyersphotography.com.

Pepper . . . And Salt

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



Beatrix Reinhardt