

How the West Gets Shot

PhotoZone's exhibition at the Emerald Art Center

Maybe it's a trend; maybe it's the influence of Ansel Adams or simply the stunning landscapes of the West, but photographers in and around the Willamette Valley seem to be obsessed with nature shots. The PhotoZone Gallery's 19th Juried Exhibition, up through Friday, July 27 at Springfield's Emerald Art Center, doesn't break that trend. Some of the artwork bows toward architecture, and a scant few portraits dot the walls, but most of the photographers give into the temptation to document the West's natural beauty. That's not to detract from the show; it's pleasant, certainly more incisive than the other shows up at the Center, and the photographers display both talent and fine attention to presentation.

Two of those who depart from the nature shot are Nancy Hagood and Ron Dobrowski. Dobrowski's silver gelatin prints leap off the wall with their balance and composition. *Arch* won an award from

Arch by Ron Dobrowski



the jury, and indeed this shot gives a sense of the dangerous, fierce beauty of Eero Saarinen's Gateway Arch in St. Louis. At 630 ft. high, it's often photographed to show off its size. But Dobrowski shoots from directly underneath, the line of the building thinning towards its top, the stark ornamentation of stainless steel plates providing interplay between patterned squares and the sinuous curve. Even better is the stark *Serra Two*, a majestic piece in homage not only to artist Richard Serra but to the confluence of Dobrowski's style with his subject matter.

Hagood's *The Pool (Black Butte Ranch)* mirrors 1960s California light paintings with its surface sheen and subtle commentary. Artificial swimming pools stand directly beside the water of the natural lake; the emptiness of the pools and the repetitive lines of the handrails reinforce the irony of the scene as well as Hagood's painterly view. *Stairwell (Kerr Library, OSU)*, an award-winner, also shows off her sharp eye for line and contrast.

The second-place winner, the outstanding *Untitled* by Shawn Kilmer, depicts a beringed and braceleted white teenager with bleached hair, dark eye makeup, tattoos, long leather boots, a lacy (possibly chain mail) bodice and a striped skirt slouching by some dry grass on a sidewalk. I heard someone describe his mounting as "sloppy," and that's true (perhaps deliberately so), but the photo's strength overrides any issues of presentation. His subject looks away but is used to being photographed; her careless pose and deracinated look make her just as much part of the West as any mountain.

Of those mountain or landscape shots, Sandi O'Brien's black and white infrared works, misty and soft-edged like a 19th century print, reveal the *5 Rivers Wayside* and *Silent Creek*, and Dave McIntire's



Writer's Block by Zoe LeCompte

Mount Rainier (an award winner) and startling *Christine Falls* lay claim to a reaction of "Whoa! How'd he get that shot?!" They're beautiful and surprising, a smart combination. Sandra Miles, also the artist of the gorgeously framed *Daybreak at Bryce*, shows the downside of progress in *Historic Nestle's Food Co.*, a dilapidated (now destroyed) warehouse in Bandon. Moss-covered boards echo the dock below them, but sag and blight make evident the cost of moving on.

Some other strong photos include Lisa Kaye's rodeo snapshots, Zoe LeCompte's hilarious yet biting *Writer's Block*, John Sconce's tongue-in-cheek monumental *La Salle* and Bredan Marsh's erotic *Honeycomb Morel*. Rich Bergeman (who also has a show up in the Florence Events Center) exhibits two photos from a term in Britain; they demonstrate his customary attention to patterns and the interplay of design with chance. Kathleen Murney's *I Adore You...* is an intricate small piece; four identical body images printed with slight variations in panels form a precise, orderly arrangement. And Michael Northup's pho-

tos demonstrate his usual eye for the weird, fascinating, magnificent details of, you guessed it, landscapes of the West. **EW**

If you haven't visited the Emerald Art Center, a jewel of a community resource, it's at 500 Main Street in Springfield (easy to get there on the EmX!), and it's well worth a trip. The EAC is open 11am-4 pm Tu-Sat. For more photos, go to www.eugeneweekly.com

Untitled by Shawn Kilmer





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