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'Photography Now' showcases innovations in process and material

'Photography Now' showcases innovations in methodology By Tim Kane Special to the Times Union Published 12:01 a.m., Thursday, May 12, 2011

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Rita Barros? ?Fernando? sums up the exhibit: portraiture isn?t always figurative. Arranged on a panel, only four of nine pictures of her subject have him in it; the remaining capture a section of a room he inhabits, a lighter and a coffee cup, his hat draped on a statue and shoes in a closet. The photo is on exhibit through May 30, 2011, at the Photography Now exhibition at the Center for Photography at Woodstock. ()



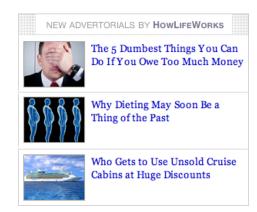






WOODSTOCK -- Although only about half the images in the 11th annual "Photography Now" exhibit, now at the Center for Photography at Woodstock, have any trace of the human figure, it's ultimately about portraiture. Without a person, Chad Kleitsch's starry voyage to the far reaches of the universe via ultra-digitally enhanced shapes conveys a





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human profile about the constant quest for technological advancement.

At one level, Mariah Doren's and Johanna Paas multimedia

collages are about nature and math, but their compositions are really about our penchant to quantify, analyze and interpret the world around us like no other species.

Robin Dru Germany's eye-level shots of the ocean through what seems to be a ship's portal created by an encaustic is all about people's relationship to the sea, reflecting our angst, curiosity and dependence on it, rather than a portrayal of the water itself.

In many ways, Rita Barros' "Fernando" sums up the exhibit: portraiture isn't always figurative. Arranged on a panel, only four of nine pictures of her subject have him in it; the remaining capture a section of a room he inhabits, a lighter and a coffee cup, his hat draped on a statue and shoes in a closet.

Things around us often relay more information than we do ourselves. This is often a more powerful narrative device than relying on body language and facial expression. Most artists in "Photography Now" find an idiom that mines this territory in effective ways.

This isn't groundbreaking stuff -- one could argue all art is a mirror on humanity and portraiture-esque and biographical. Yet each artist, through the innovative use of process and material, is forward-looking, presenting a refreshing look at the medium and the genre of portraiture.

Curated by Vincent Aletti, a writer with The New Yorker, the survey's 38 pictures illustrate how breakthroughs in image-making technology are opening up new avenues of expression in human terms. Not too long ago, the emergence of digital photography and Photoshop stoked fears that without the chemicals and the hands-one developing process, creativity would wane. The exhibit presents a strong argument dispelling such notions.

None of the images by 10 artists from across the U.S. are just purely about pushing the digital realm or concocting new materials; they stand on their own through balance, contemplation and execution producing original ideas.

Tim Kane is a freelance writer from Albany and a frequent contributor to the Times Union.

On exhibit

"Photography Now"

When: Through May 30

Where: Center for Photography Woodstock, 59 Tinker St., Woodstock

Hours: Noon- 5 p.m.; Wednesday-Sunday

Info: (845) 679-9957 http://www.cpw.org



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