

84th Annual International Competition: **Photography**

Juror's Statement

As a curator, it's all in a days work to respond to seeing a lot of art by making a small selection. The forty photographs by as many artists on view at The Print Center were chosen from the over two thousand images I looked at by 543 artists who submitted work for online review in the 84th Annual International Competition: Photography. Pause for a moment to absorb how many clicks of the mouse this represents: first to see every picture, then to actually go through a selection process of winnowing it all down to as many pictures seem like will fit in the gallery. I'm not angling for pity here—a little sympathy perhaps—but simply offering some perspective on a relatively brutal process.

And what does this selection represent? Again, as a curator I'm in the business of looking for images that strike me as relevant to some larger context or conversation within contemporary culture and are remarkable, exceptional, outstanding, arresting in their own right. To the first criteria, one might attribute this exhibition's imagery of impure landscapes (dotted with cell phone towers, surveillance cameras, suburban sprawl), displaced animals (deer are everywhere, for example), homey technology (a rapt face illuminated by a computer screen) and communal life (a tribe of surfers at rest). As an index of the whole, there was in fact almost no abstract photography, but lots of constructed imagery (staged tableaux and identities). A sense of theatricality, sometimes camp, was also on display.

In terms of the second criteria, my selection gives credence to resonance: some pictures just got stuck in my own mind. We all have our predilections and mine include narrativity, ambiguous subjects, framing devices, reflections, drawing and squirrels. With this exhibition, I found myself especially drawn to compositions in which there is a field of vision, as opposed to a focal point. Go figure.

Finally, as is always the case with a juried show, there is the frustrating fact that one cannot see the actual objects. Craft is part of every art and it's hard to discern when one is looking at pictures of photographs on a computer screen. Come delivery of the actual works at installation time, every juror may find that they misjudged some work's materiality, scale, quality and ambition; that's just part of the show. I have picked perhaps a few too many works for the space, but I like what this allowed me to create as a whole: an exhibition of photography that is very much a picture show, one that moves from frame to frame, around the walls of two small galleries, awhirl with images, like a whack zoetrope. Turning the tables, I put it to you as a viewer: what do you see in this selection? What are your criteria? What image resonates most in your mind's eye?

- Ingrid Schaffner
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