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IS DESERT DAZE THE NEW COACHELLA? | "BEING HERE" IS REFRESHINGLY POIGNANT | SORREL IN TEMECULA IS THE NEW GOURMET CASUAL

INLAND
FREE

EMPIRE WEEKLY

The Heart of
So-Cal Art

Mural Mania Comes to Life
in San Bernardino





By Tony Maher



By Thomas McGovern



By Robert Flick

Looking a Little Closer

EXPLORING THE IE THROUGH AN AMOROUS LENS

BY ROBIN JOHNSON

Discarded car lots, abandoned gas stations, the sprawling expanse of tract homes, and dried-up river beds. . . Welcome to the Inland Empire, an oasis for those willing to look just a little closer. Andi Campagnone Projects in downtown Pomona presents the work of nine artists in a revamped bank building to bring a photographic exhibition of impressive affect to the Inland Empire. Derived from the experiences of living and/or working in the IE, this group of artists creates imagery directly related to their own perspectives of life in this region. Characterized by individual views of the valley, and an unprecedented roster of heavy-hitting artists, this curation of traditional film and non-traditional digital photographs gradually dispels any myths or stereotypes that may permeate the Inland Empire. "Being Here" is a celebration of a little known secret: this place rocks!

So why here? Home is where the heart is or your heart is where your home is, either way, IE is where their hearts and their homes are. For an artist "place" greatly influences the production and process of one's work and this show aims to illuminate just how the IE has developed in the works of this group of exceptionally talented and successful photographers. Their strong ties to this region are reflected in the artworks of Lewis deSoto, Robbert Flick, Sant Khalsa, Thomas McGovern, Naida Oslin, Tony Maher, Douglas McCulloh, Julie Shafer, and Amir Zaki. Some came and never left, others grew up here, however they settled they each have something in common, they choose not to leave. This could be the principle thread running through the show, a deep appreciation that marks these works as much more than photographs of the landscape. The entire show could be rearranged, and still this commonality would radiate, distinguishing the source of their connection and what sets these images apart is the essential passion these artists feel for this specific region.

Aside from the self-portrait shadows seen in Khalsa's work and McCulloh's

digital montage highlighting a Google image search of the Inland Empire, there is an overall absence of "figure" in this show that is almost entirely overlooked and a bit mysterious. While evidence of people can be observed throughout, in the waving balloons and diner lights of Zaki's images, or the Sunset Hotel engulfed in flames by Maher, the content in these images create such a depth of character that the lack of an actual figure almost goes unnoticed. Rather, the focus becomes reserved for the spaces between, the spots void of conventional attention, hinting at the passage of time, the divides, and the boundaries. An honest observation of the reality of the place these artists are in, results in the creation of highly conceptual and technical systems of expounding their relation to their environment.

As many of the participating artists are also professors at local UC campuses, show their works across the country and internationally, and have been featured in such institutions as the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Whitney, and The MET, it comes as no surprise there is also a striking appreciation for the representation of space and time in the physical techniques ranging from traditional photographic prints to contemporary digital manipulation. Lewis deSoto creates images of extreme resolution by stitching together over 80 detail shots to create a panoramic image using a highly sophisticated digital process, while Shafer transformed a trailer into a giant pinhole camera to create Silver Gelatin negative images of the landscape.

Not just a mirage on the sweltering asphalt, the illusion of this show is that there's no illusion at all, it's all right there for the taking, you just have to look! This exhibition offers a peek into a region underrepresented on a multitude of levels. Through a powerful curation of photographers and artworks, there is already talk of a possible expansion of this show in the future. Come catch a glimpse of what these artists have seen for years, ☐

"Being Here" at Andi Campagnone Projects, 300 W. 2nd Street, Pomona. www.andicampagnone.com. Through April 27. Admission is free.



By Amir Zaki

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