

## Art Scene

# Pretty as a picture

A photography exhibit breaks new ground.

By R. B. Strauss

If you think "abstract" and "photography" are as incongruous as oil and water, then the current exhibition at Larry Becker Contemporary Art [www.artnet.com/becker.html], 43 North Second Street in Old City Philadelphia, will turn your head around. "[Some] Photography [Abstract]" features the work of five artists (though two of the quintet are the collaborative pair of Kocot and Hatton) through Nov. 17.

The total effect this exhibition achieves is confluent with the aesthetic that the gallery has always maintained, thus it is a sublime success on a number of levels; and the fact that a camera rather than a brush is the tool is key.

Liz Deschenes offers three pieces from her "Green Screen" sequence. Though I wanted to maintain a sense of mystery here regarding what has been shot, the artist gives herself away through the title. She photographs those green screens which weathermen use to project their maps, and the achieve-

ment here is heavy weather indeed. Not merely green, every effort is a brilliant, rich emerald that draws you in to a shimmering surface that fast gives way to depths, a conundrum that well transcends any notion of a mere two dimensions.

This is as much about light as color, for a verdant furnace at work here, as beyond gems, photosynthesis via chlorophyll is evident, totally organic, holistic and healing in how the values change in subtle fashion much like foliage. Hence, this could be said to be floral photography of a kind, yielding varied textures from one picture to the next in total enticement.

Kocot and Hatton offer up a number of pieces from their "70 MPH" sequence. As self-explanatory as Deschenes' work, this stalwart pair present an oeuvre created by one half driving at the allotted speed limit while the other took the picture. The effects here are in line with incredible movement maintained through necessary choreography. Indeed, there is a strong connection with dance, with said dancers the synergy of Kocot and Hatton in tandem

with vehicle and landscape.

The blur of line and blend of color put you right in the vehicle, though the real vehicle here is the camera itself. Taken on travels along the Jersey Turnpike, this sequence offers a travelogue of the Garden State that is a dizzying tour de force. The horizontal quality of this work paces velocity with trajectory to afford thus a personal space/time continuum that Kocot and Hatton gladly share with the viewer.

David Slovic is the lone photographer here who offers up a sequence by proxy, though his steadfast devotion to both his muse and means of composition places his work in good company with the rest. On shooting a single photograph, he then takes innumerable duplicates and puts them together to form a meta-image that gets into the essence of the subject. In a manner of speaking, his work is a mosaic consisting of a single tile aligned in myriad ways.

The resultant piece is less about multiplicity than how a single image can be manipulated into something new—much as stem cells eventually differentiate themselves into their prescribed organs. The source material, however, is itself



A Kocot and Hatton Ektacolor print mounted on a cast acrylic with UV lamination

always mysterious, never easily discerned, thus affording a sense of unreality to the work while at once cementing it in our world through Slovic's lens, an achievement actualized by an anchor based in metamorphosis.

Another sequence is Randy West's "Pretty." Somewhat analogous to Deschenes' work, these photographs are based in color and its singular texture and nuance. All but one are 15-inch by 12-inch "monochrome" pieces, their brevity here focusing the eye on their literalness, which are roiling slabs of shading.

West also lends his work a

simultaneity of geological and malacological effect in that all the small pieces are mounted on inch thick cast acrylic, by which the color manifests itself like quartz or feldspar—and also mother of pearl and the inside shells of other bivalves.

A tactile quality permeates these pictures, and their size resonates with an intrinsic intimacy centered as much on light as the whole of the spectrum, while the lone large piece is 50 inches by 40 inches, boasting a shade of blue as if a chunk of sky was slapped on the gallery wall in glorious, prized display.

"[Some] Photography

[Abstract]" fulfills the aim of its reach through a reliance on singular color, as both sessile source and moving force. Barriers of aesthetic conception are thrown to the wind here, in that all the work is as painterly as it is camerawork, and thus a perfect fit with Larry Becker Contemporary Art.

All the artists involved are not concerned with anything but allowing the lens to capture an absolute truth that transcends much fine art photography by attracting attention to itself as the product of a lens. Here, the process yields to the truth that beauty is never limiting.