

Movers & Makers (moversmakers.org)
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Movers & Makers

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Cincinnati

FEATURES, PROFILE, VISUAL ART

FotoFocus Biennial: Meet 5 local lens-based artists

by [Movers and Makers](#) • September 27, 2016



"Nancy with Polaroid," Roe Ethridge, 2003-2006 (C-print, 40 x 32 inches), Courtesy of the artist, Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York, and Greengrassi, London. Part of the exhibit, "Roe Ethridge: Nearest Neighbor." Organized by FotoFocus and curated by Kevin Moore, at Contemporary Arts Center, Oct. 7-Mar. 12, 2017.

Melvin Grier

When Melvin Grier was a little boy growing up off Mound Street in the West End, he remembers hearing the sounds of jazz music drifting out the back door of the Cotton Club. It was the hot club in town and Grier immediately knew it was music he would love his whole life.

Now, some 70 years later, Grier is sharing his fascination with the art form known as jazz through the art form he has practiced as a professional photographer and videographer. Although a board member for FotoFocus, he makes it clear that, for him, the theme of the photography festival does not apply.

"I document," he said, of the theme "Photography: the Undocument."
Through his career, mostly as a photojournalist, he sought to perfect the unusual angle, the interesting perspective and the use of natural light to document his subjects. His contribution to FotoFocus, on display at the Kennedy Heights Arts Center, highlights those skills while inviting the viewer to learn more about jazz and jazz artists in Cincinnati, photographed over the past nine years.



Melvin Grier



Tenor saxophonist Eddie Bayard, one of the subjects of Grier's exhibit at the Kennedy Heights Arts Center

"First and foremost, it is difficult to photograph musicians," Grier said. "And you can't hear the music, so why show just someone playing the piano or blowing a trumpet?"

So he aimed his lens at the little moments of a musician's life: holding the bass, putting a vibraphone together, tuning a piano. Given the darkness of the venues – including The 404, The Greenwich and The Redmoor, among others – he is proud that he only had to use flash for two of the 55 color images in the exhibit.

The show also includes a video about the history of jazz in Cincinnati, including photographs at various locations of the former Blue Wisp, and a video of Grier himself. His son, Miles, and daughter, Samantha, contributed to writing the stories that accompany the photos.

– By Julie Kemble Borths

Oct 1-Nov 12. "Homage to a Sound," by Melvin Grier at Kennedy Heights Arts Center. Reception: Oct. 1, 6-8 p.m. Artist talk: Oct. 22, 2 p.m.

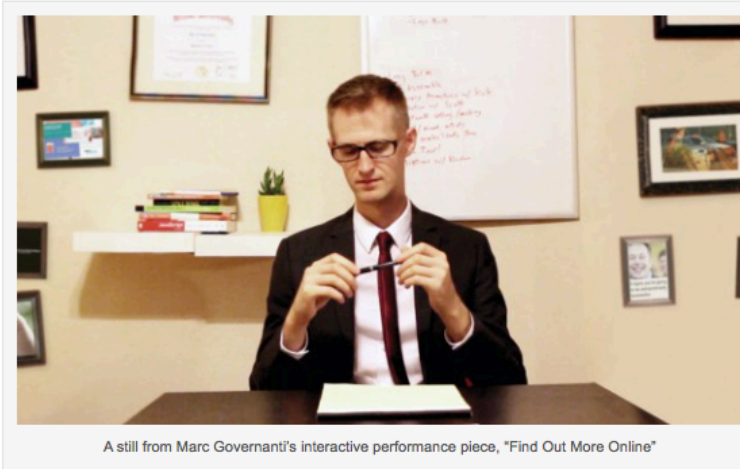
Marc Governanti

Video maker and artist Marc Governanti isn't so much interested in subverting the dominant paradigm as he is in calling attention to the fact that one exists. From logos and brands that inundate us on a daily basis, to the subtle effects constant log-ins, page refreshes and new views have on our psyche, Governanti peels back the layers of consumption that sometimes threaten to overtake our existence. Using observational and composite video footage, along with animations and live music creation, Governanti points out the absurdity of it all.



Marc Governanti

"All of that extra stimulation is adding to human beings experiencing an overabundance of trauma, different levels of trauma," said Governanti. "We have these problems on the individual level, and then we add messages and we're floating in between having to buy, having to use this website, and that adds to a lot of confusion."



A still from Marc Governanti's interactive performance piece, "Find Out More Online"

In a phone conversation a few weeks before his 2016 FotoFocus performance for Wave Pool Gallery, Governanti spoke about the noise generated by viral videos and products without substance, creating a general Internet-associated anxiety, and what he calls a "neutralized state," filled with "tropes of marketing," from the barrage of ad campaigns to the near-synchronicity of people with smartphones.

Governanti's work consists of documenting these 21st-century issues and incorporating these observations into his pieces, calling upon a cadre of artist and musician friends to act in vignettes also included in his work. For as much as he sees corporatized, cloaked-in-benevolence messaging as a problem, Governanti has his own to share.

"(A) way to cope with that is...to remove yourself from those things so we can still have human-to-human conversations, and talk and ask questions, and answer questions with a question," he said.

– *By Leyla Shokoohi*

Oct. 9, 11 a.m. "Find Out More Online: Reviews of our Fundamental Objectives," interactive performance by Marc Governanti, at FotoFocus ArtHub, Washington Park.

C. Jacqueline Wood

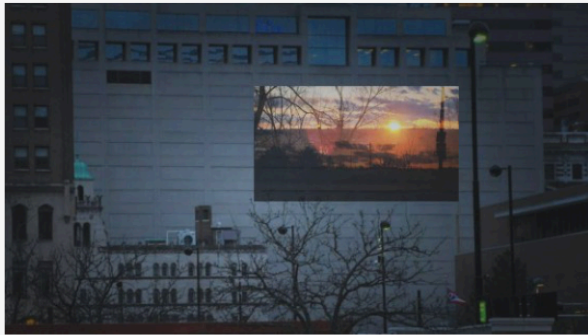
To videographer C. Jacqueline Wood, "light, in all its forms, is at the foundation of my practice." So it's no surprise she began her FotoFocus project, "SHINE," by recruiting people from Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky to photograph sunsets each evening during August.

Four hundred volunteers submitted nearly 1,000 images. Wood has shaped them into a crowd-sourced video installation to be projected (Oct. 5-12) from the Public Library's Main Branch (800 Vine St., downtown) onto a facade of the adjacent URS Center.

Wood has her own video production company, Golden Hour Moving Pictures. She's also the mastermind of the Mini Microcinema, recipient of a 2015 People's Liberty Globe Grant. The Mini is a venue for experimental film, video and media, especially by artists and filmmakers outside the mainstream. This fall she plans to open The Mini in a permanent space in Over-the-Rhine.



C. Jacqueline Wood



A mock-up of C. Jacqueline Wood's projection, "SHINE," on display after dark during October at the Cincinnati Main Public Library

"City Shine 2016" was an ArtWorks summer project, using teen apprentices to promote Wood's idea and collect photos. The effort relied on cell phone cameras to "democratize" art-making.

"The project was founded on the principle that everyone is an artist," Wood said. "We wanted everyone's perspective, to allow everyone to be an artist."

She firmly believes "SHINE," produced with support from Prestige AV & Creative Services, demonstrates ArtWorks' mission of "Empowering Creatives. Transforming Our City."

"Like the public art murals that ArtWorks paints, "SHINE" will illuminate a blank wall and transform our skyline," she said.

In addition to the projection, Wood is assembling a 10-day exhibit of prints of all of the photos for the library's entry-level lobby.

"I want to maintain the integrity of each one as a separate photograph, but at the same time put them together because they represent one moment in time from multiple perspectives," she said.

— By Rick Pender

Oct. 5-31. "SHINE," by

C. Jacqueline Wood at Main Public Library. Reception: Oct. 5, 6-7 p.m.

Gina Weathersby

Gina Weathersby is never afraid to try something new. Her journey of photography includes fashion, makeup and styling for television, print ads, movies, wardrobe, set design, magazine publishing and entrepreneurship. Beginning Oct. 14, her latest project, integrating glasswork with her photos, will be on display at Brazee Street Studios.

"Affixed" is a partner project of Weathersby and Brazee Street.

Photo and glass are not new, but

Weathersby and Brazee have created a process for combining these two media. The backdrop is a series of Gina's photos, titled "Laundry," taken from her recent trip to Greece. Born there, Weathersby has lived in and been a fixture of Cincinnati's creative community for 30 years. Her most recent venture, 513{eats} magazine, used her jump-off-the-page photos to showcase the Cincinnati culinary community.



Gina Weathersby



"Greek Laundry" by Gina Weathersby

This is her second FotoFocus. Asked how she approached this year's theme – "Photography, The Undocument" – she said, "I knew it wasn't going to be food," a reference to Weathersby's photographic contributions to the Contemporary Arts Center's recent coffee table book, "Cuisine Art Cocktails." Weathersby approaches the theme by intentionally leaving herself open to an unplanned and unknown process, which began with her photos of a laundry line she came upon while traveling, and continued through her learning about glasswork, which unfolded daily. In the end, she presents images that capture the pure, natural, organic beauty of the subject matter, even with the additional applied glass medium. In selecting the pieces for "Laundry" and "Hoops," she said that they spoke to her in their simplistic beauty.

"There is so much beauty, and I love that I can find beauty in our very sometimes unbeautiful world."

In "Laundry," Weathersby experiments with different types of glass pieces, ultimately discovering a process that brings the viewer deeper into the picture, where you can almost feel the breeze blowing the clothes on the line. In the "Hoops" series, Weathersby's daughter and her hoop become the subject of focus. Even in these unintended, underexposed black-and-white images, Weathersby captures the beauty of the moment.

Both series are at the essence of how Weathersby works and lives: embracing experiences as they happen, learning from them and never being afraid to try something new.

As she would say, "I'm a photographer, and I like to capture that."

– By Carla Walker

Oct. 14-Nov. 3. "Affixed," by Gina Weathersby at Brazee Street Studios. Reception: Oct. 14, 6-9 p.m.

Maurice Mattei

Maurice Mattei has so many talents they have to wait their turn.

He makes his living via corporate illustration and graphic design. He just designed the CD for WGUC's fundraising project, "French Bliss." He teaches drawing at the Baker-Hunt Art & Cultural Center in Covington. However, his true passions lie in photography and songwriting, so he always has a creative project in the wings.



Maurice Mattei

Mattei's coming photography exhibit – part of the 2016 FotoFocus biennial – is titled "Strainero" (Foreigner, Outsider). The show features photos taken in 1977 near where he was born in Lucca, Italy. His family came to the U.S. in 1961, when Mattei was 5.

A photographer is naturally an outsider, according to Mattei, "a voyeur, on the outside looking in."

"Although I was with my family much of the time, I was still a foreigner," he said. "Consequently, in this sense, 'Straniero' is referring to me."



From the 83-photo series "Straniero," by Maurice Mattei

Mattei's take on the theme of this year's FotoFocus festival, "Photography – The Undocument," comes from the 1950 Mexican film, "Los Olvidados" (The Forgotten Ones), about poverty-stricken children in Mexico City. He was struck by the similarity to the photos he had taken in tiny, mountain villages during that trip to Italy.

"That whole lifestyle is disappearing slowly," Mattei said, referring to life in small towns and villages. He sees this show as a tribute to forgotten things "that no longer seem relevant" ("undocumented") and "to the people involved."

"The subjects themselves are distant from us," he said, "from another time and place; culturally detached."

He became interested in photography as a student at the Art Academy. His major was graphic design and illustration, but he was "more passionate about photography, and later, drawing."

After the Wash Park Art show, the Westwood resident will shift his focus to music. His new CD (his 24th), "Songs of Peril and Conquest," will be released Nov. 18.

– *By Thom Mariner*

Sept. 30-Nov. 13. "Straniero: Pictures of Italy," by Maurice Mattei at Wash Park Art. Reception: Sept. 30 5-8 p.m. Artist talk: Oct. 14, 6-7 p.m. Interdisciplinary salon: Oct. 21, 5-7 p.m.