

FOTOFOCUS BIENNIAL RETURNS: KEEPING PHOTOGRAPHERS IN FOCUS

By Mary Casey-Sturk

Imagine galleries across town filled with vibrant images from up-and-coming photographers. Imagine classic black and white images celebrating the streets of Paris and New York. Imagine conversations with artists and curators sharing their visions. This October, your imagination is rewarded as you experience the FotoFocus Biennial, presenting all of this and more.

Since its inception in 2010, FotoFocus has been putting the focus on photographers and lens-based art forms through a variety of exhibitions, programs and lectures. They have collaborated with hundreds of artists, curators and organizations to present over 600 exhibitions and programs (and still counting). That's pretty amazing in itself; and when you consider this is a non-profit organization, you'll be even more amazed.

Hyde Park resident and founder, Tom Schiff, has long been a fan of photography and is a very talented photographer himself. His sweeping photographic journeys using



Tom Schiff (left) and Kevin Moore (right), Artistic Director of FotoFocus. (Photo provided by FotoFocus)

a 360° panoramic camera have adorned galleries and coffee tables throughout the country. You can view Ohio through his lens in the books *Panoramic Cincinnati* (1999), *Panoramic Ohio* (2002), and *Wright in Ohio* (2017) (Thomas R. Schiff). He's also

explored Las Vegas, Virginia, Columbus, Indiana and more.

The photography bug seemed to have bitten Schiff early in life and he confirmed, "It started in grade school with a Brown-

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ie camera. I also took photographs for the yearbook and newspaper while in high school". If that's not impressive enough, he also built a dark room while in junior high school!

What prompted him to create FotoFocus? "I've always been involved with the Contemporary Arts Center, the Cincinnati Art Museum and the Taft Museum of Art. I just felt there were not enough photography exhibitions." Working with then-curator of photography at the Cincinnati Art Museum, James Crump, FotoFocus was born.

Mary Ellen Goeke, Executive Director of FotoFocus, shares what the community can expect this year, "Visitors to the fourth iteration of the FotoFocus Biennial can expect the same quality exhibitions and programs they have found in previous Biennials - but with many more options.

"FotoFocus again partners with a number of different types of organizations, large museums, smaller museums, universities, galleries and arts centers. Visitors can choose from many different events, receptions, exhibitions and programs occurring throughout the month of October."

Goecke continues, "With so much variety, visitors will be sure to find something to their tastes: historic and contemporary,



Thomas R. Schiff's Hyde Park Square from his most recent book Cincinnati Panorama - copyright 2017 Thomas R. Schiff

progressive and traditional, landscapes and portraits.

"An additional spotlight on Cincinnati neighborhoods has been added this year. FotoFocus has created Neighborhood Weekends to better focus the programming and opportunities for Cincinnati's many culturally distinct neighborhoods. East and Central venues are highlighted on October

27th."

Does Schiff have any favorites this year at FotoFocus? "With over 90 exhibitions, I like to see a little bit of everything," adding, "I am excited about the Paris to New York: Photographs by Eugène Atget and Berenice Abbott at the Taft Museum of Art, which was curated by Kevin Moore." Moore is the FotoFocus Artistic Director and Curator of

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"Beside Me" (Another Succulent Painting), courtesy of LMAK Gallery, by Jimmy Baker, will be on view at the Weston Art Gallery. (Photo provided by FotoFocus)

the exhibition and author of the accompanying catalogue.

Mark October 4-7 on your calendar for the FotoFocus Biennial. With dozens of projects at galleries and museums across Greater Cincinnati, Northern Kentucky, Dayton and Columbus, they include over 200 artists, curators and educators. Many are free, but the purchase of a Passport (\$25)

in advance makes good sense for access to all exhibits and exclusive events.

In 2018, the theme is Open Archive. In part, the theme will seek to examine our fundamental need to preserve photographs and tell stories through them. Additional events/exhibitions run throughout October. For a complete list of programs, events, Neighborhood Weekends, and to buy a



Shown at Taft Museum of Art: Eugène Atget (French, 1857–1927), "Cour St. Gervais et Protais (Courtyard, St. Gervais and Protais)," 1899–1900, gelatin silver chloride print, 8 7/16 × 6 3/4 in. Courtesy of the Philadelphia Museum of Art - Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Carl Zigrosser, 1968, 1968–162–32

Passport, please visit www.fotofocuscincinnati.org.

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