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Two FotoFocus Shows Not to Miss

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Emily Hanako Momohara's "Gathering"

Hard to believe, but we're halfway through October, the main month of the FotoFocus Biennial. (Some FotoFocus-related shows run longer.)

So this weekend is really a great time to get out and see some of the shows — fotofocusbiennial.org has a full list. Find *CityBeat's* full FotoFocus preview [here](#).

Two that I highly recommend, and that I'm afraid might be overlooked because of bigger museum shows, are Emily Hanako Momohara's *Heirloom* — at Downtown's Weston Art Gallery — and David Benjamin Sherry's *Western Romance* at a temporary space at 1500 Elm St. in Over-the-Rhine. Momohara's show is up through Nov. 30 but Sherry's ends Nov. 1.

Both use color wonderfully to make you focus on objects and/or landscapes close-up — so close-up they have a transporting, transcendent effect if you can spend enough time with them.

Sherry, an L.A. artist recently featured on *The New York Times Magazine's* cover, uses color in a psychedelic way, achieving the effect he wants during processing. It gives his Western mountain and desert landscapes a glaze — a "purple haze," in the case of "Putting Grapes Back on the Vine" — that turns physical geography into a state of mind. There are also in the show black-and-white prints by masters of Western photography — Ansel Adams, Carleton Watkins — to acknowledge Sherry's debt and also proclaim a change.

Momohara, who taught photography at the Art Academy of Cincinnati but now is relocating to China, is using *Heirloom* to explore ideas about her Okinawan and Japanese ancestry. These distinctive still photographs and photograph-like videos isolate and deeply contemplate objects related to or inspired by that.

The vertically formatted pieces — like the fantastic "Gathering" video, which looks at luminescent, open-mouthed koi as they crowd around the water's surface — seem to be moving forward a grand narrative, like scrollwork. And the more horizontal pieces, like "Mask #1," revel in mystery through the way illuminated objects occupy space in an otherwise dark ground.

To me, these two shows are among FotoFocus' very best — and I especially hope Momohara returns at some point with something much more extensive.