

Manifest Gallery's FotoFocus Shows Were Powerful



"Standard Double (Feet)" by Gloria Houg

So many FotoFocus-related shows overlap and then close in October that it's hard to get to them all or even write about in a timely fashion those that I do get to see. But I didn't want to let Manifest Gallery's *Neither Here Nor There* juried group show of photography and video work and its separate but related Leigh Merrill video installation, both of which closed Oct. 24, to go unrecognized. For *Neither Here Nor There*, the quality was overall quite high and some of the work has stayed with me now for several weeks long after I've forgotten other shows.

New York-based artist Gloria Houg won the \$1,000 Best of Show prize for her "Standard Double (Feet)," one of a series of eerie shots made in a bedroom that in some way incorporate images of an apparently absent person's presence into the scene.

The results cause a double-take among viewers, but the work is too elegant to be jokey or gimmicky. She infuses the commonplace with mystery.

The London-based Emma Charles, whose short films explore "the dialogue between time and the city," contributed the mesmerizing, 17-minute *Fragments on Machines*. Short sequences, some with poetic narration, take us out on the streets and sidewalks of the city and up close to the exteriors and (most ominously) interior infrastructure of buildings. There is beauty and alienation, especially as we look closely at the rows of servers that power modern office buildings. You can watch it [here](#).

And Leigh Merrill's video installation *Drive Thru* is a deadpan looping look at the flat barren architecture of suburban sprawl, except the places were created by her digitally assembly of parts from individual photographs and images. The result highlights the strangeness — and questions what draws us as people to seek or support such development in the first place.