

# Who put up that dome at The Banks?

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*(Photo: Provided)*  
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Wondered why that white dome is outside the National Freedom Underground Railroad Center this week? Or who took those dozens of massive photographs displayed in windows around the Aronoff Center Downtown?

Turns out, the same event is behind both of these installations: FotoFocus Biennial.

So let's back up and start with the best question to ask: **What is the FotoFocus Biennial?**

It's a lot of things, actually. Like more than 60 exhibitions and more than 100 events at venues throughout the region. That includes eight major exhibitions curated by artistic director Kevin Moore. More on a few of those soon.

Overall, this programming is a month-long celebration of photography and other lens-based art. And it all centers around a theme. This year, it's "Photography, the Undocument." There are certainly a lot of ways artists interpret that theme. FotoFocus describes it this way: The program "seeks to break apart assumptions about photography's documentary character by emphasizing the medium's natural tendency to distort and reshape the visible world."

Founded in 2010, FotoFocus is Cincinnati-based nonprofit and does more than the biennial program. Since then, the group has presented almost 300 projects, collaborated with more than 100 partners and funded more than 150, according to the organization's website.

The group also produced the Lecture and Visiting Artist Series. That's brought more than 35 acclaimed artists from around the globe to the Queen City, including Doug Aitken, Gregory Crewdson and Laurie Simmons.

Check out all the events on the FotoFocus [website](#). You can also get admission by purchasing a FotoFocus passport [at the link](#).

**Does this have to do with the photos we are seeing in storefronts Downtown?** That's the work of Cincinnati photographer J. Miles Wolf. The interactive FotoFocus exhibit is called "Obscure Cincinnati" and includes more than 40 massive photographs of mysterious moments, places and people in Cincinnati.

Up through October, these images are all within a four-block footprint along Walnut, Sixth and Main streets. There's a map and more at [www.obscurecincinnati.com](http://www.obscurecincinnati.com).



**“Obscure Cincinnati”** is a collaboration involving J. Miles Wolf, DCI and FotoFocus. The photos will fill the windows and doors of nine buildings including the Contemporary Arts Center, 21C Museum Hotel, the Aronoff Center and six other buildings along Sixth and Main streets. *(Photo: The Enquirer/Carol Motsinger)*

Here's how it works. First, find those images in the windows and doors of nine buildings, including the Contemporary Arts Center, 21C Museum Hotel, the Aronoff Center and more. Next, guess what you are seeing. What building host that grimacing gargoyle? What statue poses with those bronze hands?

Don't worry if you don't recognize these images immediately. Just scan the QR code with your smart phone and you'll get a hint and a bit of history about what you are seeing. And eventually, the answers.

You can also grab a map inside the Contemporary Arts Center.

**Anything else happening inside the CAC?** Of course. Check out "Roe Ethridge: Nearest Neighbor," opening Friday. It's the artist's first solo museum exhibition in the U.S. and will present 15 years of Ethridge photographs.

According to the CAC, "this mid-career survey documents the disparate concepts and photographic methods evident in the artist's broad range of processes, focusing on his shifts between the realms of commercial, fine art and personal photography."

It's up through March 12 at the institution at 44 East Sixth Street.



A look inside the FotoFocus satellite display. It's open to the public. (Photo: Provided)

**And what exactly does this have to with that white dome at The Banks?** That dome is actually called FotoFocus ArtHub: Satellite Project Space and it's an interactive space that's open to the public through Oct. 9. You'll find it right outside of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, 50 East Freedom Way.

Inside, you'll see a part of the Wave Pool's exhibit, "The Peeled Eye," and it uses installation, video work and performance art. "The Peeled Eye" looks at the "mechanisms and outcomes of contemporary surveillance," according to the Freedom Center. You can also check out the related display at Wave Pool on Colerain Avenue through Nov. 21.



A look inside the Freedom Center's presentation of "Zanele Muholi: Personae." (Photo: Provided)

**What's happening inside the Freedom Center?** A lot. And it shouldn't be missed.

First, there is "Zanele Muholi: Personae," a stunning exhibit of black-and-white portraiture and photojournalism from the South African artist and activist.

According to Muholi, her mission is "to re-write a black queer and trans visual history of South Africa."

It comes in two parts. First, "Faces and Phases." This features a selection of the around 300 images from Muholi's 10-year-old series of black, South African women who identify as lesbians. Look closely in this section of "Personae." Some of the images are actually the same person at different times in her life.

That is paired with "Somnyama Ngonyama," a series self-portraits "examining the nature of historical stereotypes through pose, costume, and gesture," the center says.

Muholi's work is presented with "Jackie Nickerson: August," a collection of portraits of African farm laborers. Produced over the course of two decades, the work examines "the physical and psychological impact of agriculture in southern Africa," the center says.

And there is one more experience you can't miss, "Robin Rhode: Three Films." It features three short films from the South African multimedia artist.

The Freedom Center will also host a reception for these shows at 3:30 p.m. Saturday, with an evening program at 5:30 p.m. featuring Muholi.

