

FotoFocus Biennial 2014



FotoFocus Art Hub, designed by architect Jose Garcia

FotoFocus Biennial 2014

By PAUL LASTER, NOV. 2014

The second edition of the FotoFocus in Cincinnati raised the bar for future incarnations of the fledgling biennial of photography and video. Organized by executive director Mary Ellen Goeke and artistic director Kevin Moore, who curated six original exhibitions, the Biennial offered works by and programming about modern and contemporary artists working with photographic and moving imagery in a variety of venues around town.

"Photography in particular is a creative medium that we all engage," stated Moore, who has worked in the curatorial departments of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard University. "For the second edition of the FotoFocus Biennial, I wanted to open a conversation about photography as a dialogue—as a medium that functions as a mediator between our lives and our contemporary world, also examining how photography is in constant dialogue with its own history, and with other art forms, notably film, or the moving image."

Vivian Maier: A Quiet Pursuit offered an amazing overview of the recently discovered photographer's self-portraits and street imagery in a reclaimed space in Cincinnati's historic, Over-the-Rhine neighborhood, where David Benjamin Sherry's stellar, monochromatic photos of the American West were juxtaposed with black-and-white images by photographers that initially documented the sites and inspired his journeys—including Timothy O'Sullivan, Ansel Adams and Minor White—in David Benjamin Sherry: Western Romance, in a salvaged space nearby.



David Benjamin Sherry, All The Words Float in Sequence, 2014. Traditional color darkroom photograph, 72 x 91 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Salon 94, New York



David Benjamin Sherry,, Saguaro Field, Tucson, Arizona, Traditional Color Photograph 29 5/8 x 38 3/4 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Salon 94, New York

The collaborative Swiss artists Taiyo Onorato and Nico Krebs (aka TONK) presented a selection of witty photographs, sculptures, and films in their first museum exhibition in the United States at the Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati. The Berlin-based duo makes cameras out of found objects—such as a stack of books and the shells of armadillos and turtles—and documents road trips in unexpected, whimsical ways. In conjunction with the show, the CAC and FofoFocus published a large-scale artist's book, titled *Lightning Tree*, of TONK's photos of tree and experimental light machines.

Screenings offered a dozen art films shown at the forward-thinking Lightborne Studios, designed by Argentina-born, Cincinnati-based architect Jose Garcia. The program paired contemporary works with historical precedents related to six topics: Performances, Others, Fictions, Enterprises, Loves and Causes. Rainer Ganahl's 2013 film of classical musicians performing in a discount store, El Mundo, and Peter Roehr's 1965 shorts of repeating television commercials were amongst the standouts.

The exhibition Stills complimented Screenings with a display of thirteen contemporary artists using photographic "freeze frame" techniques to isolate a their subjects in time. Ryan McGinley depicts a striking young model with her hair in motion; Matthew Porter captures cars in midair while seemingly flying over hills on urban streets; and John Waters portrays Inga in cinematic ecstasy by showing five film frames of her erotically writhing head.

Other highlights included Eyes on the Street, a group show of such exemplary street photographers and videographers as Philip-Lorca diCorcia, James Nares, and Michael Wolf, mounted by the Cincinnati Art Museum and Paris Night & Day: Masterworks of Photography from Atget to Man Ray, a stellar show of vintage photographic treasures reflecting the beauty of the "City of Light" from the late-19th century through the 1930s, at the Taft Museum of Art.

Finally, Fotogram@ArtHub, on view in a temporary structure at Washington Park that was also designed by Garcia, displayed an Instagram feed of images with the hashtag #FotoFocus2014 on a big screen inside and at several other locations around the city, including the art-savvy 21c Museum Hotel.

The icing on the cake of the three-week biennial, however, was a side-splitting, hilarious monologue from artist and filmmaker John Waters on sex, art and his personal filmography, delivered live-on-stage at the historic Memorial Hall—leaving no doubt in audiences' minds that FotoFocus 2014 is going to be a tough act to follow!



Vivian Maier, Self-portrait, 1959, Gelatin silver print: printed 2013, Courtesy Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York



Nicolas Provost, STARDUST, 2010 – 20 min. Courtesy Tim Van Laere Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium



Rainer Ganahl, El Mundo - A Classical Music Concert, 2013 - 55 min. Courtesy the artist.



Ryan McGinley, Helena, 2010. Silver print, 18 x 12 inches. Courtesy the artist and Team Gallery, New York



Matthew Porter, East Side, 2013.Pigment print, 30 x 38 3/4 inches. Courtesy of M+B Gallery, Los Angeles



Taiyo Onorato & Nico Krebs, Abyss, 2006 from The Great Unreal, 94 x 120 cm. C°C-Print, mounted and framed. Courtesy RaebervonStenglin, Zurich and Peter Lav Gallery, Copenhagen



Philip-Lorca diCorcia, Head #1, 2001, 48 × 60 in. Courtesy of the artist and David Zwirner, New York/London



Man Ray, Portrait of Dora Maar, 1936, photograph. Collection of Michael Mattis and Judith Hochbert



John Waters during his performance at Memorial Hall during FotoFocus Biennial 2014. Photo by Jacob Drank