



31 WOMEN IN ART PHOTOGRAPHY

By KATY DONOGHUE

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SIGN UP TO WW'S NEWSLETTER

Ann Woo, Cave, 2007, 30 x 40 inches, C-Print, 1/5, courtesy of the artist and Humble Arts Foundation.

This Saturday, March 6, "31 Women in Art Photography" presented by [Humble Arts Foundation](#) opens at [Affirmation Arts](#) in New York. Curated by Charlotte Cotton and Jon Feinstein, the show features 31 works by 31 female photographers selected from open submissions. Hosting the exhibition is Affirmation Arts, a nearly two-year-old space that's dedicated to supporting professionalism in the arts and both emerging and mid-career artists through programming, exhibitions, and education. The photographers that Humble has brought together this month (which is Women's History Month) blur the line between photographic practices like documentation, abstraction, and portraiture, fitting into a very contemporary category of art photography. Artists of note in the show include Ann Woo, Jessica Eaton, Claire Beckett, Kristine Potter, Jessica Mallios, Lisa Robinson, and Heather Rasmussen.

It's a beautifully curated show, with all photographs at eye level, placed symmetrically on the same horizon, and equidistant from each other over three walls. This layout gives the artists an equal weight and voice. Speaking of voices, as the curator's statement points out, don't expect to be bowled over by a "decidedly 'female' voice." While "31 Women in Art Photography" includes an all female cast, within the actual work that fact is merely a footnote. This is a strong show of truly inspired photography worth making a trip for this month or before April 10.

WHITEWALL: This is the second time Humble has had a show of 31 women in art photography. How is this show different from the first exhibition?

JON FEINSTEIN: Two years ago it was 31 under 31 and it was very much focused on a specific generation of women. We decided this time around that there are so many negative connotations or forced associations of "emerging" with "being young." So many photographers are starting out in their thirties or just picking up a camera in their late twenties and the ability to emerge at an older age is important to recognize. It turns out that more of the women in this show are older than 31, which is interesting because originally we were going to have an age requirement and with that you wouldn't have 75% of the show.

WW: This show is opening during Armory week in New York. Why did you feel that this show was appropriate to present at this time?

JF: Mainly to have it open in March, March being Women's History Month, was an obvious tie in to celebrate women in a month when you are maybe more focused on that. But this week especially being Armory week when all the fairs are up, we thought it would be a great way to get added exposure and attention for the artists involved. As much as it's about getting exposure and finding gallery representation for the artists, there's still the importance of connecting them with collectors and people that can help and financially support their careers. So while that's on people's mind, while people are thinking about buying or at least considering work in that context we thought it was an appropriate time.

Kristine Potter, Untitled, 2009, 32 x 40 inches, archival pigment print, 1/5, courtesy of the artist and Humble Arts Foundation.

WW: You make the distinction of saying “art photography” as opposed to just “photography.” How do you define art photography?

JF: In Humble as an organization, we're really not interested in straight fashion photography or straight documentary photography. We are interested in work that can blend those lines. And we're finding now that there are no longer, at least in the most contemporary of contemporary art photography, these rigid definitions of simply abstract or simply representational. A lot of work treads both lines and is a lot more fluid than it may have been in the past. You have work like Claire Beckett where it is a documentary project following soldier's training for the Iraq War but she's approaching it with a view camera. There is an element of staging to it and it's fully conscious but it's still working in the documentary traditions of a lot of other photographers. [These Photographers] have a unique reinterpretation of the medium.

WW: Is having a female focused exhibition a commentary on the underrepresentation of females in photography?

JF: Yeah, definitely. That's something that's changing, especially with the Internet and the way that that's created much more exposure for photographers in general. I do know from research that the percentage of women coming out of MFA programs in photography is still much higher than the number of women represented in blue chip galleries, major galleries, and in museum collections. That's definitely changing but we still feel that there is a need to get as much exposure for women as possible and hammer that home in order to maintain the process that's already happening.

Jessica Eaton, Shadow 9, 2009, 16 x 20 inches, inkjet print, 1/5 + 2APs, courtesy of the artist and Humble Arts Foundation.

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