

# M + B

## The Seattle Times

### Photo Center NW's 'Process' is about more than images

In its new group show, 'Process,' Seattle's Photographic Center Northwest explores all the permutations that paper, chemicals and light can produce — some image-oriented, others not. Through June 15, 2014.

March 28, 2014

By Michael Upchurch

There are plenty of things you can do with light-sensitive, chemically reactive paper besides capturing images on it — although of course it's still well-suited, in plenty of ways, to capturing images, too. That seems to be the message of "Process," a lively if uneven new group show at Photographic Center Northwest.

"Process" offers a sampler of what emerging photographers, most in their 30s, have been up to lately. "Artists included in this exhibit," PCNW tells us, "reflect the present and future of photography, exploring material, duration, and the relationship between image and object." The artists come from across the U.S., and include some locals.

As it happens, the spectacular centerpiece of the show, "HEAD(S)," is by Bellingham-based Garth Amundson and Pierre Gour, who are partners in life as well as art. Another good title for "HEAD(S)" might be "It's a Man's Man's Man's World."

Amundson and Gour have taken literally hundreds of headshots — ranging from ¼ inch across to 2 or 3 inches — and made an exploding universe out of them. The heads are all male, and they're mounted on pins like butterfly specimens. Together they form a huge circle/sphere that manages to be both comical and cosmic. Certain faces repeat — could that be Justin Timberlake? — but with only the oval of their faces to go by (most peripheral details, such as hair, have been trimmed away), they're difficult to identify.

Besides, they span well over a century in time and aren't all famous. Goofy grins and 1970s haircuts are interspersed with dapper mustaches from circa 1900. The result is a physiognomic whirlpool that keeps inviting you to take the plunge, with repetitions of certain faces lending the whole thing a playful structure.

While "HEAD(S)" is highly eccentric in its presentation, it doesn't much change the age-old dynamics of photography the way other pieces do.

Brea Souders' archival pigment prints, "#9" and "#24," are photographs of photographs — shots of scraps of negatives she was throwing away. Both are appealing abstracts, with figurative snippets (flowers, foliage, flashes of light) giving them a grounding in the real world.

Laura Plageman does something similar in "Response to Print of Trees and Fog, California" and "Response to Print of Monterey Bay, Santa Cruz (#3)." Both are shots of existing photographs that were crumpled, so that the "geography" of the wrinkled paper becomes conflated with the peaks and folds of hillsides and skies the original photographs depicted.

Nature and artifice blend in more mysterious ways in Charlie Rubin's work, where odd aberrations of color appear in what appears to be standard outdoor photography ("All your dreams belong to us," an inkjet C-print, is the most seductive of these). The colors aren't "off" in Andrzej Maciejewski's "Weather Reports" — made with a walk-in camera obscura and oversized lens — but their circular format, time-lapse element and vivid color make them similarly surreal. The most experimental fare dispenses with photo-chemicals' image-making capacity altogether. Curtis Mann's "Removal attempt, randomly orbital sanded" takes overexposed light-sensitive photo paper as its "canvas," then uses physical intervention — with an orbital sander, here — to create a ghostly abstract pattern on the pitch-black paper.

From a distance, Meghann Riepenhoff's "Untitled (Rodeo Beach, CA 04.17.2103, One Wave, Dipped)" and "Untitled (Tower Beach, SC 05.28.13, Tidal Pools, Dipped and Buried)," look almost like Impressionist paintings of California hills and a glacier face, respectively. But they're the results of reactions between paper and chemicals and the saltwater in which they were immersed.

**Phil Chang's work (photograms that, with light exposure, fade to nothing) and Matthew Brandt's (photos processed, in part, with the bodily fluids of the models being shot) seem like conceptual pieces without much aesthetic payoff. But there's plenty of work worth investigating here.**