



PHOTOGRAPHY



Robert Richfield,
'Glasgow, Scotland' (2006).

ROBERT RICHFIELD

Photography's Summer Show Samplers

By WILLIAM MEYERS

In the summer months, photography gallery shows tend to serve up a smorgasbord of artists: Some feature prints left from exhibitions in the previous season, some introduce newcomers being given their first tentative public exposure, some mix favorites of the curator juxtaposed in curious ways. For those who enjoy a little-of-this and a-little-of-that, the Laurence Miller Gallery has an exhibition entitled "Past (Present) Future," which puts several unlikely artists together to "reward viewers who did not catch things the first time around."

There is a mini-reprise of the Diane Arbus and Helen Levitt show from last season with "The Junior Interstate Ballroom Dance Champions, Yonkers, N.Y." (1963) by the former next to "Amazed Boy" (c. 1940) by the latter. The Arbus is set in an auditorium, the Levitt on a New York City street; there are class differences between the dancers; differences in the cameras used; and, most importantly, differences in the photographers' emotional relationship with their subjects. Peter Bialobrzeski's "Heimat 29, Nord-

PAST (PRESENT) FUTURE

Laurence Miller Gallery

TIME

Fotosphere Gallery

RECENT WORK FROM GALLERY ARTISTS

Alan Klotz Gallery

see" (2003), his medium format c-print of vacationers on yellow sand by the blue sea, is back for a second look, and Burk Uzzle's "Prada, Marfa, TX" (2005), a medium format c-print of a luxury goods store located seemingly in the middle of nowhere, is on display as a preview of a show to open in September. Michael Spano, Ray Metzker, and Jakob Tugener, Jerry Uelsmann, among others, are included in this potpourri.

Fotosphere is a gallery devoted to fine art black and white photographs with an emphasis on such alternative printing techniques as

platinum/palladium, albumen, cyanotype, and colotype. The interest in these techniques is not simply a sentimental antiquarianism; they were superseded by gelatin silver, and now by digital printing technologies, not because the latter are better, but because they are easier and less expensive. The older methods, when utilized by a master, still produce prints of greater subtlety, depth, and richness. It is like listening to music played on high-end, state-of-the-art stereo equipment; you notice nuances that are just not audible on standard computer speakers.

For the summer, Fotosphere is exhibiting "Time," a limited edition portfolio book with two colotype pictures each by eight photographers, including George Tice, Emmet Gowin, Eikoh Hosoe, and Graciela Iturbide. The set comes in a special paulownia wood box. This is meant for connoisseurs, but if you have ever admired George Tice's "Petit's Mobil Station, Cherry Hill, New Jersey" (1974) in a gelatin silver print or magazine reproduction, you will see how much more there is to admire in the colotype version.

There are platinum/palladium prints at Fotosphere by Jessica Hampton, Machiko Kurita, and

the presiding master printer of the gallery, Koichiro Kurita. Ms. Hampton's work is from her "Just Like Home" project, depicting small town life. A 16-inch-by-20-inch picture of a performance platform in a rinky-dink joint is centered on the large American

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flag that serves as a backdrop and the Budweiser ads that surround it; the platinum/palladium print picks up the texture of the flag and of the fake wood paneling of the wall it is attached to. Ms. Kurita's 4-inch-by-5-inch still lifes of fruit are reminiscent of the exquisite still lifes by the great Czech photographer, Josef Sudek. Again, the platinum/palladium medium lends an almost tactile sense of the textures of the skin on her figs or pears, and renders the gradations of her lighting with

fine delicacy.

Mia Hamada's 10 9-inch-by-9-inch gelatin silver prints from her "Depiction" series mark her first exhibition in America. These are simple subjects — a field of grass, the bare branches of a tree in silhouette — captured with careful precision. They are certainly modern in feeling, but redolent of haiku and the traditions of Japanese visual culture.

One of the three artists in the summer exhibition at the Alan Klotz Gallery also uses a 19th-century technology, the tintype. Alida Fish has created a "From the Cabinet of Curiosities" by first gathering a hodgepodge of oddments and photographing them digitally, then modifying the images, and then printing tintypes from positives. The tintype was a poor man's daguerreotype, using a base metal instead of silver as backing, and chemicals suspended in collodion. The combination of these technologies produces dark prints with an aura of mystery about them.

Robert Richfield's panorama views are constructed from a series of pictures taken around a point. Many of them swing a full 360 degrees so, for instance, they may look off the same end of a bridge on either side of the print. The pictures are only between 14 and 20 inches high, but can be as wide as 10 feet, and are printed with narrow black borders, marking the break between the con-

stituent color images. Although this is all contemporary technology, the sites depicted are Old World European, frequently shot to exclude signs of modernity. Two views of Prague seem unchanged for centuries. A panorama at twilight of Ragusa, a small hill town in the interior of Sicily, is particularly effective, with a view of another small hill town in the distance.

Klotz's third summer offering, appropriately enough, is vintage prints of Coney Island taken by Harry Lapow in the 1950s and '60s. Walker Evans, Weegee, Leon Levenstein, Bruce Gilden, and Harvey Stein all shot Coney Island, so we have a wonderful record of the rise and fall of the city's most popular summertime resort. Now that Coney is about to be rebuilt, it is good to have Lapow's shots of people frolicking on the beach at mid-century, drawn by the sea, the geographical feature least subject to change.

"Past (Present) Future" until August 16 (20 W. 57th St., 3rd floor, between Fifth and Sixth avenues, 212-397-3939).

"Summer Group Show '07" until August 18 (511 W. 27th St., suite 505, between Tenth and Eleventh avenues, 212-352-0235).

"Recent Work from Gallery Artists" until August 18 (511 W. 27th St., suite 701, between Tenth and Eleventh avenues, 212-741-4764).