

The Washington Post



Arlington Arts Center's 'Image/Project' focuses on contemporary photos and video

By Michael O'Sullivan

Washington Post Staff Writer
Friday, January 8, 2010

"Image Project" at the Arlington Arts Center, is less about picture than camera. Not in a technical sense. The showcase of contemporary photography and video art isn't about megapixels or expensive lenses. Rather, it's a show about seeing the unseen, looking at the overlooked.

Most of the 19 artists -- 14 photographers and five videographers selected by photographer Taryn Simon from nationwide submissions -- treat the camera as less of an aesthetic instrument than a scientific device. That old-school balance between formal composition and narrative information is suddenly out of whack. These pictures are, for the most part, neither especially pretty nor overwhelmingly interesting.

Now hold on. This can actually make for a kind of exhilarating experience, as long as you're comfortable not always knowing what you're looking at, or why. That practice, in a nutshell, seems to be the artistic credo of the "Image/Project" artists, whose cameras, more than anything, are evidence-collection tools. But evidence of what, in the end? Only that their eyes are always open and prepared to find what the rest of us fail to take note of.

Image/Project Through Jan. 16 at the Arlington Arts Center, 3550 Wilson Blvd., Arlington (Metro: Virginia Square). 703-248-6800. <http://www.arlingtonartscenter.org>. Hours: Tuesday-Saturday 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission: Free