

The Seattle Times

VISUAL ARTS

Photo Center NW's 'Process' ventures beyond the image

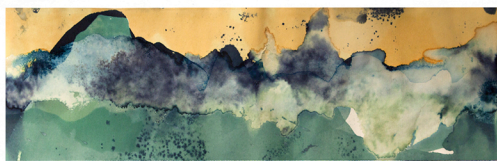
By MICHAEL UPCHURCH
Seattle Times arts writer

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



COURTESY OF PHOTOGRAPHIC CENTER NORTHWEST

Meghann Riepenhoff, "Untitled (Rodeo Beach, CA 04.17.2013, One Wave, Dipped)" (2013), unique cyanotype.

"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 Brand'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.

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VISUAL ART LISTINGS

Dates and times are subject to change. Call ahead to confirm.

Events

SlashFest

SAT-SUN Sale of fabrics for quilting, fashion and home decor, wearable items, proceeds benefit La Conner Quilt & Textile Museum, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Sunday, La Conner Civic Garden Club, 622 S. Second St., La Conner, free early bird admission 10-11 a.m. Saturday, 512 (360-466-4288 or laconnerquilts.org).

Art in A Pickle Barn

SAT Artwork by 28 members of the Skagit Art Association, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. daily, through April 30, Azusa Farm and Gardens, 14904 State Route 20, Mount Vernon, free (360-424-1580 or www.azusafarm.com/contact-us.html).

Wallingford Art Walk

WEB Galleries and shops throughout Wallingford keep their doors open from 6-9 p.m.; free (www.wallingfordartwalk.org).

Artist Lecture: Mel Chin

WEB A discussion with artist Mel Chin, who insinuates art into unlikely places, including destroyed homes, toxic landfills and television, 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Kane Hall, University of Washington, Seattle, free (206-543-9198 or www.washington.edu).

Seattle Art Walk

THU A host of new shows previewed in downtown and Pioneer Square galleries, open late for First Thursday, Seattle, free (www.firstthursdaysseattle.com).

Museums

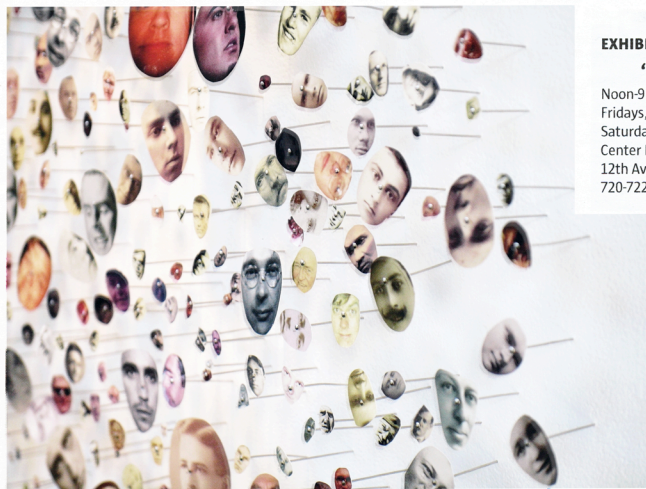
Bainbridge Island Museum of Art

ENDS 6/1 "Dialogue with Nature," sculpture by David Eisenhour. Also tracing "Tsunami Papers," works by Tracy Lang. ENDS 6/8 "Inner Portraits: Group Exhibition," 10 a.m.-6 p.m. daily, 100 Ravine Lane NE, Suite 201, Bainbridge Island (206-842-4451 or bainbridgeartmuseum.org).

Bellevue Arts Museum

ENDS 9/21 "At Your Service," A group show featuring works by curators Niki Johnson and Amelia Toelke along with Ariel Brice, Gesine Hackenberg, Molly Hatch, Giselle Hicks, Garth Johnson, Sue Johnson, Emily Loeble and Caroline Slotte. ENDS 4/27 "Crafting a Continuum: Rethinking Contemporary Craft." ENDS 6/15 "Life," Sculptures by Kathy Venter.

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COURTESY OF PHOTOGRAPHIC CENTER NORTHWEST

Detail from Garth Amundson/Pierre Gour, "HEAD(S)" (2013-14), pigment prints and steel bank pins.

EXHIBITION REVIEW 'Process'

Noon-9 p.m. Tuesdays-Fridays, noon-6 p.m. Saturdays, Photographic Center Northwest, 900 12th Ave., Seattle (206-720-7222 or pcnw.org).