

The Columbus Dispatch

Entertainment

Exhibit | 10 Ohioans expand horizons of photography

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In the Ohio Arts Council exhibit "Photography's Back to the Future," images by 10 photographers from throughout the state illustrate how artists working in the medium today are exploring creative possibilities beyond easily reproduced digital snapshots of people or food.

As Catherine Evans, a curator at the Columbus Museum of Art, notes in her introduction: "Photographers today are redefining and even rejecting the medium's limitations and its core properties -- reproducibility and its slippery relationship to veracity. .??. Technically, aesthetically and conceptually, they are re-imagining and reasserting the medium's role in contemporary culture."

Contributors such as Francis Schanberger of Dayton begin their approach with a few steps backward, combining traditional technologies with new tools and images.

Inspired by the allergies that seized him after moving to Ohio from California, Schanberger employs the 19th-century Vandyke brown printing technique for a series of works that muddy the distinction between nature study and portrait. Rendering a dried weed in an epic size and the velvety tones of his chosen technique, the artist blends a sense of personality with the stateliness of a formidable opponent. The feeling is reinforced by the title, *Don't Take This Personally*.

Using the camera-free photogram process first popularized in the 1920s, another Dayton resident, Tracy Longley-Cook, creates images by painting her skin with photochemicals, pressing it against photo paper and exposing it to light. The result is part unique personal portrait, part record of a moment. Modern technology fuels the work of Dennison Griffith, president of the Columbus College of Art & Design. Prompted by his frequent work-related trips to museums, the artist deploys his iPhone to offer a distinctly personal, detail-oriented view of artwork and awe-inspiring architecture.

The ease of using a camera phone also plays an essential role in the capture of buildings and signage by Amanda Hope Cook of Columbus, but each work is made unique and painterly by her labor-intensive use of a photo-manipulating application.

Among the most resonant works are those that dramatically undercut the idea of photography as a representation of reality -- such as Dayton resident Janelle Young's mixed-media explorations of dream-inspired imagery; and Cleveland resident Lori Kella's riffs on classic nature photography using obviously artificial miniatures.

Similarly, Jordan Tate of Cincinnati seems intent on taking the medium to new places by first showcasing its limitations. The approach yields renderings of classical sculpture on scrolls of paper that seem remarkably flat yet still hold an unusually compelling visual power.