

CONNECT / DISCONNECT: Technology and Communication

Curator - Cheryl H. Hahn



Collage 1 by Christopher Petrich



Untitled by Alex Brikoff

LARSON GALLERY

September 14 - October 15, 2010

Artist Reception: September 25

Jan Bogle

Joan Bowers

Alex Brikoff

DeAnna Foran

Ron Hammond

Craig Alan Huber

Will Peterman

Christopher Petrich

Stan Raucher

Diane Stefanich

Helen Todd

George Tuton

Bryan Willman

Exhibition Themes—

This timely and thought provoking exhibition features thirteen artists from the Seattle area who belong to a photography organization called *Group f/5.6*. The artists and I have been dialoguing about the exhibition's theme for over two years. **Jan Bogle, Joan Bowers, Alex Brikoff, DeAnna Foran, Ron Hammond, Craig Alan Huber, Will Peterman, Christopher Petrich, Stan Raucher, Diane Stefanich, Helen Todd, George Tuton, and Bryan Willman** have created



Connect by Craig Alan Huber

numerous works that involve diverse issues. They range from religious contemplative thought, so beautifully expressed by Jan Bogle in her black and white photographs of Reverend Mitthabhani, to cell phone isolation as we see in the work of Alex Brikoff, and the subject of LED light pollution illuminated by Craig Alan Huber. Indeed, a variety of social and cultural phenomena are explored including the changing

role of libraries and Braille literacy---a unique theme addressed by Joan Bowers. Diane Stefanich presents a lonely white rotary dial phone as it journeys through various environments that allude to “connections” both old and new. These environments give pause—perhaps asking more questions than offering answers to our communicative dysplasia.

Other artists have captured the structural beauty of newly antiquated machines such as a Royal typewriter so skillfully photographed by Helen Todd and an electric switchboard visually scrutinized by DeAnna Foran. Keys, cables, cords and other mechanisms are transformed by Todd and Foran into elegant linear networks revealing tangible inter-workings that once marked older technologies. This is even more evident in Ron Hammond’s documentation of a weaver at work. In honor of the fact that hand weaving is one of the oldest universal technologies shared by cultures throughout the world, Hammond completed a series of works titled “The Work of the Weavers,” several of which are featured in this exhibition. Hammond uses the weaver theme to illustrate both the beauty and contemplative nature of hand weaving as well as and the demise of this weaving “trade/technology” in the 18th century.



Knitting the Warp onto the Apron Rod by Ron Hammond

Other social/cultural attitudes and conditions are examined by Stan Raucher, George Tuton, Bryan Willman, Christopher Petrich, and Will Peterman. Raucher presents haunting images of commuters in his series of photographs titled the “Metro Series.” Tuton creates a matrix of disparate messages (both in the form of text and imagery) in his large work “Out of Context VII,” and Petrich explores the

discussion of “touch.” Petrich utilizes his own mark making in three collages that “interweave puzzles and puns” as he visually “layers conversations” through a vibrant use of color and gestures. Another large format work by artist Bryan Willman titled “People I Do Not Know” draws viewers into a cultural gaze at crudely painted cardboard and paper signs carried by homeless persons. He offers us a visual disconnect between what it means to be “normal” in our society and what the other side of that coin might be. Lastly, Will Peterman gleans meaning from his intensely hued figurative photographs that allude to the human condition and what the future holds. His photographs address what we are, how we learn, and how we connect with each other as well as the products that we interact with on a daily basis.

The Impact—

There has been much dialogue about the changing face of communication, reading, writing and technology in general during the last sixteen years. For example... Sven Birkerts states in his 1994 book *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age*: “If you change the way people communicate you change the way they live.” This book outlines the transition from the written and typed word to the

digital age and the consequences therein. Philosopher and writer David Abram also investigates the increasing abstract nature of language in his 1996 book *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-than-Human World*. A more recent March 13, 2010, article in *The Seattle Times* by Tyron Beason looks at how technology may be “profoundly hurting our ability to be social, empathic, and involved with each other.” Indeed Beason makes a case for restoring our real connections with people in real time and space in his article titled “The Digital Disconnect: In Relentless Pursuit of ‘Connecting’ We Miss Out on Each Other.” After all, we are still only human—muscle, sinew, and a cacophony of biological complexities connect us all.



Switchboard by Deanna Foran



Self-Portrait by Joan Bowers

We are, of course, benefiting from new technologies every day in a myriad of ways, including instant access with others across the globe, and new tools with which to create, connect and communicate imagery, ideas, and just plain conversation. And information is right at our fingertips involving nearly every conceivable topic, thought, subject, concern, or question that one might want to address. Rather than consulting or reading the traditional book, however, we now scan screens.

Kevin Kelly aptly and thoroughly explores such major paradigm shifts in his recent essay: “From Print to Pixel” (July/August 2010 issue of *Smithsonian Magazine*.) He begins with a discussion of how humans have progressed from

story-telling, to cave “writing,” to penning on paper, to the printing of books with Gutenberg’s invention of the printing press around 1440, to the introduction of widely used televisions in the 1950s, to the computer and lastly, to the plethora of contemporary digital devices. The author outlines:

“Today, some 4.5 billion screens illuminate our lives. Words have migrated from wood pulp to pixels on computers, phones, laptops, game consoles, televisions, billboards and tablets. Letters are no longer fixed to black ink on paper, but flitter on a glass surface un a rainbow of colors as fast as our eyes can blink. Screens fill our pockets, briefcases, dashboards, living room walls and sides of buildings. They sit in front of us when we work---regardless of what we do. We are now people of the screen. And, of course, these newly ubiquitous screens have changed how we read and write.”

And what are some of the outcomes of reading/writing changes? Kelly goes on to state:

“The amount of time that people spend reading has almost tripled since 1980. By 2008 more than a trillion pages were added to the World Wide Web, and that total grows by several billion a day. Each of these pages was written by somebody. Right now ordinary citizens compose 1.5 million blog posts per day. Using their thumbs instead of pens, young people in college or at work around the world collectively write 12 billion quips per day from their phones. More screens continue to swell the volume of reading and writing....But it is not book reading. Or newspaper reading. It is screen reading.”

Much screen reading encompasses an endless stream of data, and how this kind of information gathering is impacting our society continues through an on-going debate. Quoting Kevin Kelly once again: “Visualizing data is a new art, and reading charts a new literacy.” Alex Pham and David Sarno also address this new type of reading and the future of books in their Los Angeles Times article: “The Future of Reading” recently published in the Yakima Herald-Republic’s August 6, 2010, issue of *On Magazine*:

“As electronic reading devices evolve and proliferate, books increasingly are able to talk to readers, quiz them on their grasp of the material, play videos to illustrate a point or connect them with a community of fellow readers.”

The article describes a myriad of other benefits including the ability of young authors to publish and promote their own work.

Ultimately, the way we structure our lives and the ways we connect with each other and the world around us are forever changed. As curator of this exhibition, I want to thank all the participating photographers who have embraced the theme of the exhibition through artistry, skill and ingenuity. It is my hope that viewers walk away with both an appreciation of and thoughts about how the tsunami of media-driven technology impacts our lives, directs our future, and alters our thinking.



Detail of *People I Do Not Know* by Bryan Willman

Introduction—

My interest in the themes of this exhibition was triggered by a box of letters that I (and my numerous siblings) discovered in 1997 following the death of our mother. As it turns out, she kept every note, card, and letter that she and my father exchanged over their 55 years of marriage in addition to love letters they penned during dating years in the late 1920s. These literary treasures were unknown to us, and it was an emotionally moving experience to read the letters, to marvel at their love for each other, and to see their handwriting--- their personal “mark making.”



Pahinda Palma Leaf Writing by Jan Bogle



Can You Hear Me? by Diane Stefanich

A few weeks later, while holding the letters, it occurred to me how significant their correspondence was. Unlike most letter-writing today, my parents’ postal exchanges possessed a precious quality about them as objects, due not only to their obvious contents but also to their materiality. They also evidenced my parents’ propensity to make small sketches on their notes, to write with a fountain pen, and to make other marks that were intimate identifiers of their authorship. On-going thoughts and research about my parents’ literary exchanges inspired me to complete a body of artwork about language, resulting in my on-going passion for the themes of “Connect/Disconnect: Technology and Communication.”

Connect/Disconnect: Technology and Communication is made possible by donations from EFCOM - Yakima’s MAC Store, Daryl and Sherrie Parker and the Larson Gallery Guild.



Pearls by Helen Todd



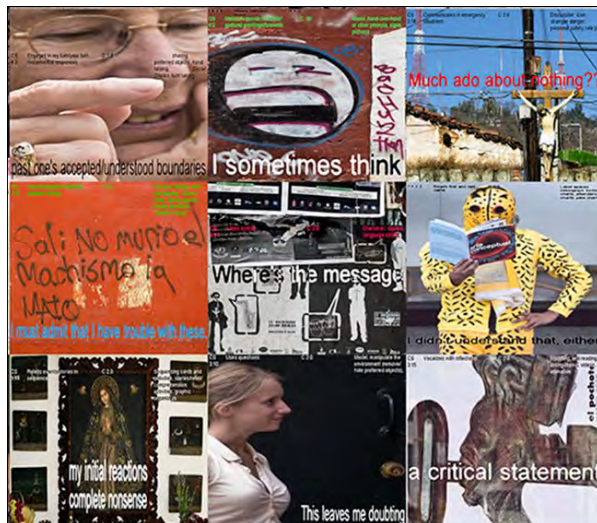
Construction by Will Peterman

The Larson Gallery will expand on this discussion through three special programs scheduled during the show.

- A presentation and lecture “**Privacy Matters**” will be given by YVCC Library and Media Director Joan Weber on September 30 at 7pm in YVCC’s Raymond Library.
- EFCOM will host a workshop in the Larson Gallery on October 7, “**Creative Tools.**” This workshop will inform the public about new Apple products and what lies ahead with future technological developments.
- Lastly, a “**Book Discussion**” will be hosted by Yakima Valley Libraries in the Gallery on October 13. This discussion involves the book *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury which is the designated book for the “Yakima Reads” city-wide program.



Metro Line 1 Near People’s Square, Shang Hai
by Stan Raucher



Detail of Out of Context VII by George Tuton

About Group f/5.6:

Group f/5.6 (founded in 1996) is an organization in the Greater Seattle, Washington area offering mutual support and encouragement to artists working in photography. The name is a light-hearted reference to *Group f/64*, the group of photographers (including Ansel Adams, Imogen Cunningham and Edward Weston) that pioneered the ‘straight’ style of photography emphasizing ultra-sharp images and dramatic tonal range.... For more information contact www.groupf56.com.

Larson Gallery Hours: Tuesday through Friday 10am - 5pm and Saturdays 1 - 5pm

—Free Admission—

On the YVCC campus at the corner of 16th Avenue & Nob Hill Boulevard

509.574.4875

gallery@yvcc.edu

www.larsongallery.org