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Michener Museum executives exhibit photography in Lansdale

May 13, 2011 | By Victoria Donohoe, For The Inquirer

Is it a trend? Are more museum professionals aspiring to play a comparable role in city or suburban cultural life apart from their day jobs, as two of their colleagues are doing in Lansdale?

Bruce Katsiff and Brian H. Peterson, respectively the director and chief curator of the James A. Michener Art Museum in Doylestown, both happen to be accomplished photographers. And in that capacity they're reaching out to shape cultural life in a community apart from their own by exhibiting together in a show, "Eye to Eye," at Water Gallery in Lansdale, each showing photos never before displayed as a group.

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No ordinary venue, that showcase. Billed as "a commercial gallery with the mind-set of a nonprofit," Water Gallery is owned and operated by artists, and aims to support growth and positive change in Lansdale. For starters, the gallery donated 100 percent of proceeds from January and February to Manna on Main Street, a local group dedicated to feeding the hungry.

So, what's to see? The wonder of Katsiff's beautiful, soft-edged vision of Bucks County's rural and garden landscape, captured with infrared film, produces a mysteriously sparkling pale light throughout these black-and-white pictures. Such works achieve a sensuous surface and velvety depth in a series completed in 1979. Handling of light is an ongoing interest for both these photographers.

Peterson, from the mountains of Montana and methodical in his approach to photography, adopted a more spontaneous, intuitive way of observation during his recent photography jaunt to Kure Beach, N.C., and it served him well.

Clearly, Peterson felt emotionally involved with the early-morning scenes he presents in this "Sea of Light" series and had a very personal feeling for his surroundings. He brings to the task a particular sensitivity to color that glows with an inner life, expressing well his own sense of the lyrical in nature. Some of these photos express a radiant fusion of earth, water, and sky, as if the intention was to transcend both nature and photography and affirm anew, with lucid unity, all life. This is a strong show.

Water Gallery, Dresher Arcade, 349 W. Main St., Lansdale. To June 19. Thu.-Sun. noon-5 p.m., Fri. to 9 p.m. Free. 215-260-6078.

Two at Rosenfeld

Dan Dallman, in a twin bill at Rosenfeld Gallery, aims for psychological depth and also gathers casual impressions in his show "Self Images," featuring 21 small self-portraits and two larger paintings, all in oil.

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Many of these small works are intense, while others seem relaxed. The pungent little head studies using himself as the subject are something new for this prominent Philadelphia figurative painter and teacher. It's not necessarily the most impressive work he's done, but at his best here Dallman combines lightness with technically acute subversion.

Also at Rosenfeld, painter David Shevlino, of Wilmington environs, favors the use of sunny color possessing particular brilliance and holding power. These fairly large oils offer a heightened sense of hedonistic suburban summer pastimes by the pool. And while his view of the future isn't pessimistic, it trembles on the verge of something edgy and gothic in several painterly works of otherwise bright and sunny leisure activity, embodying in them a jolting strangeness. Shevlino achieves eventfulness rather than evenness.

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Rosenfeld Gallery, 113 Arch St. To May 22. Wed.-Sat. 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Sun. noon-5 p.m. Free. 215-922-1376.

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