

ENTERTAINMENT

Page A8

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Time and space collapse in photographs

By John Seven

North Adams Transcript

ADAMS — Photography is the result of combing light and time into one singular moment, but Cynthia Lawson has turned that inside out by creating images that show all moments at once, collapsing the law of physics on the gallery wall.

Lawson's work will be shown along with Ven Voisey's at Greylock Arts, 93 Summer St., beginning Friday, Aug. 19.

Two of the works to be displayed are "The Shops, 96 Seconds" and "Beaubourg, 36 Seconds #1 and #2," both of which use layering techniques to highlight patterns of movement through time that are impossible for human eyes to decipher without help. That is where the similarities end, with Lawson using different technologies to achieve similar results.

In "The Shops, 96 Seconds" Lawson captures an area filled with people by taking 42 photographs in 96 seconds and then spending hours photofinishing digitally for the final image. Lawson begins by creating a blank slate, digitally removing all the people in the images to provide a base layer from which to build.

"I identify the various characters that I'm interested in extracting," Lawson said. "The characters were never digitally drawn to be in a place where they were in the photos. I go through the photos, it's a very meticulous process of extracting each character from each one of the photos in which they were walking."

"There are more people that I extracted that I ended up not including in the work, and there are more people that were in this shot that I just never paid attention to. But I'm interested in extracting the ones that seem so performative for the viewer of the artwork."

For her "Beaubourg, 36 Seconds #1 and #2" series, which presents the resulting images in a grouping of light-boxes, Lawson takes a physical

approach for the visual layering by printing her images on transparencies and then creating the layered image within the lightbox itself.

Lawson doesn't shoot with a tripod — she strives for spontaneity, which requires people to not notice that they are being photographed. Digitally, Lawson might adjust the layers to match architecturally, and then she prints them. Once the layers are printed on transparencies, Lawson begins to play with the quantities she will use to craft the image.

"If I print too many, the piece can get very, very dark," she said. "If I print too few, it loses the effect of having a three-dimensional depth, so part of that is also being able to manipulate them once they are physically printed."

Lawson's photos are taken at regular intervals and, when arranging the transparencies, she keeps this in mind, making sure that the duration between the layers are consistent.

"I'm pretty anal about making sure that I'm snapping it almost the exact same time," Lawson said, "so at half-second intervals I take every photograph, and then, let's say I have six photos, I will either print all six consecutively or print two, four and six — I never print one and two and six."

Lawson's process is comparative to that of the Hubble Telescope, in which different black-and-white images that capture various colors are combined and applied to a color processing system to fashion something that can't be seen by the naked eye. As with the Hubble, the human limitations of time and space perception require the presentation of such facsimiles to perceive the imperceptible — and physical labor on the pieces add to that.

"Between each print there's a sheet of acrylic," Lawson said. "The thickness of that acrylic is thin enough so you can still see the next layer, but



Photo courtesy of Cynthia Lawson

Cynthia Lawson's "The Shops, 96 Seconds."

thick enough that you get a sense of physical depth that represents time passing."

Each photo represents one moment in time with many people, but the work is part of a larger body, called "Hidden Choreographies," in which Lawson attempts to uncover the unnoticed patterns and movements of a city that exist consistently due to the urban design. Her work has an aspect of time-lapse photography, but she also exerts control that is not allowed for in that form.

"I'm creating a manipulation — not so much digitally manipulating the scene, but manipulating the viewer and questioning what is it I'm looking at," she said. "So my favorite question is, what is real, and what is digitally created in these? The taxis in the background never move, but, of course, they were moving through the time I was stand-

ing there."

Lawson began this work on a visit to Tokyo — it wasn't the plan, but a result of her making the most of the materials she had at hand.

"I took a bunch of photographs in a train station, and it was so chaotic. It was really amazing, that the density of people walking in front of me," said Lawson. "When I got back, I had all these photos and wished I could capture it on video and started playing around with how these could potentially become longer durations of time than just one photo itself, and that's what led me to creating these light boxes and the layering and all of those ideas."

The work proved to be a perfect way to capture the individual pulses of cities she had visited throughout her life, including in childhood.

"I was very interested in how

I could, through photography, start to share the time of a city in some way," Lawson said. "I guess I've been looking more at readings in urbanism, so one particular reading that I love is this idea that the city is in constant motion because people are always moving through it and that's the motion that I'm trying to capture and share."

This was combined with a larger desire to add something to photography by acknowledging other medias that had cropped up in our technological era and might lend themselves to capturing such intangibles as the flow of time in a new way.

"I wanted to push back on what I mostly see in photography, which is one photograph," said Lawson. "I think that with current technologies, almost anyone can take and print and frame a beautiful photograph. I felt that as an artist working

in a variety of media, I really wanted to bring something new to photography. That's the impetus behind the work."

Though Lawson paints in time and uses the moments to find patterns while looking at all moments at once, she doesn't come to that with a scientific outlook despite the similarities. She feels it might be interesting to move in that direction — her background is in electrical engineering.

"Some people have related my work to quantum physics, the idea that we can be in two places at the same time," she said. "The question is always how I did this — what am I seeing — and people often think that I am digitally producing new people where there weren't any, but it is just collapsing time and space in different ways."

Cynthia Lawson can be found online at cynthialawson.com.

France and Fratelli stand up to be noticed

By John Seven

North Adams Transcript

DVD

"Queen To Play" (Zeitgeist Video)

Chess as a metaphor is not so obscure, and in cinema it always goes straight back to "The Seventh Seal" as a struggle for mortality, as a microcosm of the highest stakes.

In "Queen To Play," chess instead stands for more intimate concerns like empowerment, the ability to control all the parts of one's own life, as well as some middleground issues on the cosmic stage, like a woman's place in a family.

The Kiosk

Helene (Sandrine Bonnaire) is a housekeeper and hotel maid who becomes obsessed with not just learning, but mastering the game of chess after witnessing a flirty match during her job. At first making overtures to her oafish husband — aren't they always — she stumbles into an extracurricular opportunity with an secretive and abruptly mannered doctor (Kevin Kline) who begins to see the appeal of playing a chessmaster Obi-Wan Kenobi to Bonnaire's appealing Luke Skywalker as French cleaning lady.

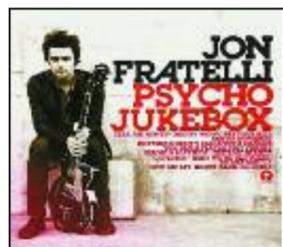


Image courtesy of Island Records

The Fratelli's frontman breaks free.

With the conflicts set up — both dramatic and metaphorical — the audience watches Helene fight the adversity of small minds in order to master the game of chess, which is treated almost like dancing is in "Footloose." And that makes for some very bizarre undercurrents in the film, revealing it as a bit of unpretentious French cheese with such an odd core that it can't help but be appealing.

"Queen To Play" uses the quintessential "underdog triumphs against adversity" trope that makes it seem almost American, and that may be the key to its likability. Even as a look into French sentimentality in regard to empowerment, and a self-examination of societal chauvinism, "Queen To Play" comes off as a hybrid

film meant to portray this dialogue to Americans. It is a foreign film that seems to have been made as an explanation of culture to its potential viewers across the sea, and therein lies the secrets of its allure.

Music

Jon Fratelli — "Psycho Jukebox" (Island)

The ex-Fratellis front man delivers a 16-point argument for why he should be a superstar on this solo debut. Fratelli has two albums by his former band — one brilliant, one tolerable — behind him, as well as his wild ride of a boy/girl duet album with burlesque performer Lou Hickey under the name Codeine Velvet Club, which ushered in plenty of revelations about the stylistic turns Fratelli is capable of.

With "Psycho Jukebox," Fratelli is once again jumping styles and genres, all of them with a feeling of impending hugeness.

Fratelli is one for bombast and drama, as well as raunch,



Photo courtesy of Zeitgeist Video

Sandrine Bonnaire in "Queen To Play."

and he can channel his inner Gene Pitney via surf rumba stylings on "Give My Heart Back Macguire" as easily as he can Marc Bolan, as he does on "She's My Shaker." And there's plenty more in between, from the '60s jive of the opener "Tell Me Honey" to

"Oh, Shangri La" — which is not unlike an Abba rave-up — Fratelli has crafted a work designed to show off his strengths in a sprawl that ends up seeming remarkably cohesive by the end.

Thus is his musical arsenal —

an energetic mix of showmanship and sincerity that coalesces in an album that feels more like a full-blown stage revue. He's eclectic and accessible all at the same time, and he should conquer an America desperate to remember what it's like to actually rock.

MASS MoCA

ZANY UMBRELLA CIRCUS & OKO SOKOLO COMPANY

Fri. August 19, Sat. August 20, & Sun. August 21
3:00 & 5:00pm each day

Pittsburgh's Zany Umbrella Circus, a delightful throwback dedicated to folk artistry of all kinds—puppetry, circus, music, storytelling, street theatre and visual arts—teams up with Germany's Oko Sokolo Company to present this dazzling work, inspired by the children's book *Mirette on the Highwire*. At a little inn in Paris in the 1920s, a young girl finds her calling, while her youthful courage and optimism reignites a love of the art for a wire-walking superstar. The performance uses physical theater, masks, dance, and circus, with staging that gives a nod to a time when bohemian artists created theater in rehearsal halls illuminated by gaslight.

Joe's Field or Hunter Center / \$12 adults / \$8 kids

Ukulele Orchestra to play Sunday

NORTH ADAMS — The Ladies Auxiliary Ukulele Orchestra will perform on Sunday, Aug. 14, 7 p.m., at Minerva Stage, 1288 Massachusetts Ave.

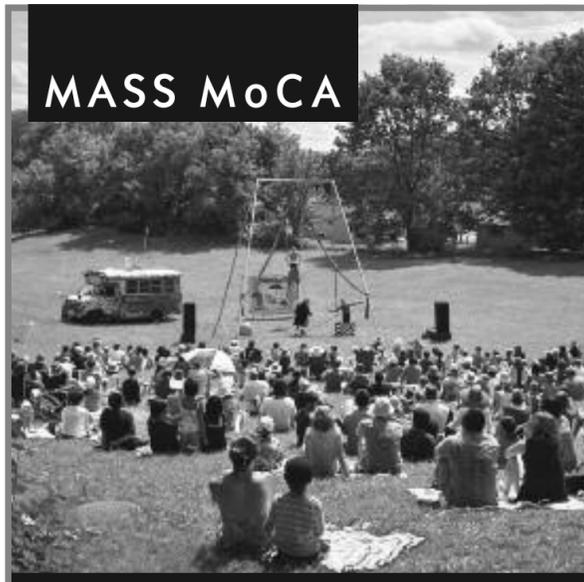
Formed in 1994, members include songwriter and educator Bernice Lewis, composer and teacher Cathy Schane-Lydon, and artist Sarah McNair.

The orchestra's set list features songs from every musical era, ranging from Mozart to the Andrews Sisters, from Led

Zeppelin to Radiohead.

Audience members are encouraged to bring their own ukuleles to the show for a "Uke-in" toward the end of the performance. The band passes out extra instruments, teaches songs, and invites the crowd to join in.

Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$5 for students, seniors, and children. Information: minerva.stage.com or 413-346-4502.



87 Marshall Street, North Adams, Massachusetts 01247 • For tickets, call 413.MoCA.111 or visit massmoca.org