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ART REVIEW: Double play at Montserrat galleries



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The two exhibitions currently on view at the Montserrat College of Art galleries each take a different approach. "Free Air 4 You" is the fanciful title of a small but alluring show of seven photographs by Remi Thornton (in the Schlosberg Gallery through Feb. 7). The a major exhibition, "I Will Go On, ...

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'Cabin 6E,' a digital C-Print photograph by Remi Thornton.

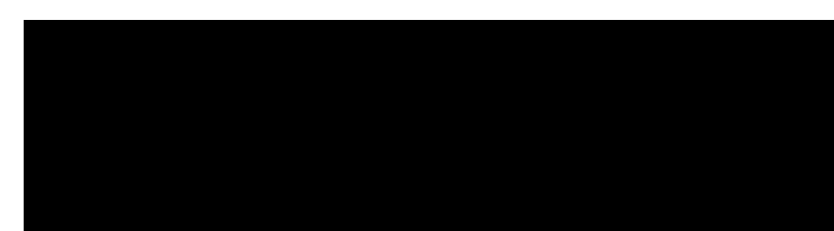
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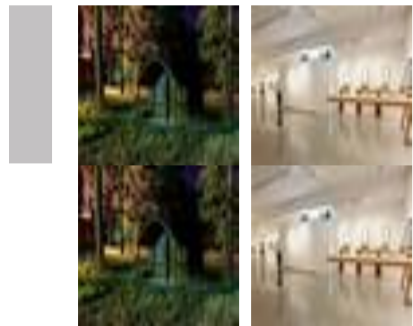
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'Cabin 6E,' a digital C-Print photograph by Remi Thornton.



By Keith Powers / Correspondent

Posted Jan. 28, 2016 at 9:14 PM

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If you go...

WHAT: Two exhibitions at Montserrat College of Art: "I Will Go On..." at Montserrat Gallery; and "Free Air 4 You" at Schlosberg Gallery;

WHERE: Monserrat and Schlosberg galleries, 23 Essex St.; Beverly

WHEN: "Free Air 4 You" through Feb. 7; "I Will Go On..." through April 2

TICKETS: All shows are free. Visit

www.montserrat.edu or call 978-867-9604

The two exhibitions currently on view at the Montserrat College of Art galleries each take a different approach.

"Free Air 4 You" is the fanciful title of a small but alluring show of seven photographs by Remi Thornton (in the Schlosberg Gallery through Feb. 7).

The a major exhibition, "I Will Go On," in the Montserrat Gallery through April 2, compares the work of five artists to the grueling challenges of a marathon.

"Free Air 4 You," the more modest of the shows, a small set of digital C prints by Remi Thornton in the Schlosberg Gallery, is not to be missed. Drawing light, drama and nostalgia out of severe nocturnal backgrounds, each of the works has a skewed, Edward Hopper-type narrative.

Nighttime and darkness usually induce foreboding; in Thornton's work — shots of an abandoned campsite, a filling station, or a car wash — the darkness creates an aura of mystery. It invites the viewer in to uncover the secrets, rather than scaring the viewer away.

"I Will Go On..." takes its title from Samuel Beckett's "The Unnamable." It's an appropriately artistic reference to the persistence of work. The show brings together five artists, all saying something different, elusive but compulsive. Insightfully organized by Pamela Campanaro, associate curator at the college, "I Will Go On..." shows artists who not only bring endurance to their practice, but intelligence and style as well.



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The presence of Rachel Perry Welty's "Twitter Project," displayed in real time on an oversized computer screen, may be the most telling of the installations. Of course you could just follow Perry Welty (@rpwelty) on Twitter; her feed, ongoing since 2009, gets documented here, unaltered.

So where's the art? It's in the idea.

"Twitter Project" chronicles the life of the artist, and in some ways mimics her body of more traditional work ("traditional" in the loosest sense): fascinating collections of twist ties, receipts, found objects and other vernacular items that she posits in arresting ways. (Don't miss Perry Welty's other current exhibition either, an installation at the Gardner Museum.)

Jenny ODell also works in the vernacular. She's a pack-rat anthropologist, snagging items from recycling, her past, or the internet, researching them, and then presenting her findings as visual art and as online "scholarship."

This exhibition takes from her investigative recycling project, "The Bureau of Suspended Objects," obsessively relaying the genesis of objects from a Bay Area dump near her home. (Visit her other fascinations at www.jennyodell.com.)

Aaron Meyers's "I Must Nearly Be Finished" has a shelf-life — literally and figuratively. Terrible pun aside, Meyers sets up cantilevered planks extending from a wall, sits on the end, and then drills holes in the wood until it breaks, tumbling him to the floor.

It's the old Saturday morning comics trope, and Meyers won't be able to maintain this punishment-art forever. But for now, everything — the installation, the performance of the deliberate fall, and the resulting broken planks — figure into the piece. "It Must Be Nearly Finished" has an abstract elegance, sculptural and active at the same time.

The remaining examples of marathoner-like artistic devotion are equally appealing. Jon Kuzmich creates abstractions from millions of needlepoint brush-marks. Liz Jaff's enormously gorgeous paper structure, "Plugs and Fuses," dominates the room. All of this work pays dividends to close investigation.

The exhibitions are all free to the public. "Free Air 4 You" runs through Feb. 7; "I Will Go On..." through April 2. Visit www.montserrat.edu or call 978-867-9604.

Keith Powers covers music and the arts for the Gatehouse newspapers and WBUR's ARTery. Follow @PowersKeith; email to keithmichaelpowers@gmail.com

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Wellspring House						
Manchester COA trip to Christmas Tree Shops						9:30 am
Manchester Council on Aging						
Friday Morning Play Dates at Maritime Gloucester						10:00 am
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