
Art Review

Bennington Photography Show Shines

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— Bennington College's group exhibition in the Usdan Gallery is a must for anyone interested in photography.

Photographs from the college's own collection are joined by works from the 19th century from the collection of Tom and Elinor Burnside.

Stuart Diamond's paintings stick out, unrelated to the rest of the exhibition in style or substance. The "mixed media paintings" are in reality assemblages of two or three dimensional materials that leave the wall and become sculptures. Of the two, "Pendulum" is the more satisfying, an architectural piece that draws the eye into its many nooks and crannies. "Contained" is thick and busy, while "Pendulum" invites the curious, with its play of curves and colors.

An 8-year-old friend said "Pendulum" gave him a "spacy feeling — like a space building or something," and called it "the main attraction."

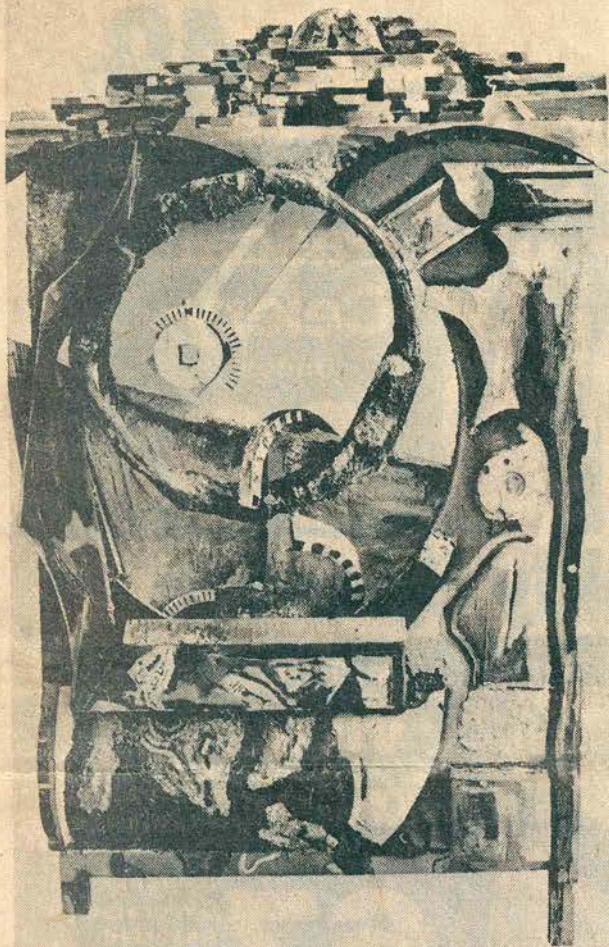
Our young friend like Robert Doisneau's untitled photograph of a live person

among wooden, painted faces, called it "people coming up from the dead."

The Bennington collection also features several photographs by Edward Weston. "North Dome" is a magnificent landscape, its dark details etched flawlessly onto the paper.

Ansel Adams "Oak Tree" makes you look again and again. Behind the snow-bound tree are other trees and behind them, a mysterious phantom mountain that looks like an illusion. In another mood is Adams' "Orchard, Early Spring," all blossomy poetry, the trees marked out in repeating pattern like an elegant wallpaper design.

Eliot Erwitt places an amusing group of girls and geese together in a sunny scene. One of the show's best photographs is a surrealistic portrait by Manuel Alvarez Bravo. A woman's face peers out of shadow, from under a dark cloth she holds over her head. She appears to be standing behind a miniature house, constructed of old door or molding sections and the sort of paper curlicues you see in pinatas. The "house" covers her torso. Across its bottom level are three sets



"Pendulum"
By Stuart Diamond

of viewers — the kind that used to be on stereoscopes or attached to peep shows. The woman watches the photographer watching her, invites unseen watchers to look through the three pairs of lenses, and the whole scene remains a mystery to everyone but the woman herself.

Another unusual photograph is by Edward Steichen, done in the 1900s in strange shades of dark greenish black and yellow. The exhibitors have not given us any information about the show, a frustrating habit the college should reconsider. Even a rough mimeographed catalog would be appreciated. There is thus no information about whether the colors are due to photographic processes or tinting. Steichen has pictured soft-edged sheep at dawn or twilight, a romantic vision created in the "early 1900s," undated and untitled.

In another mood, a wildly rearing rodeo stallion by Garry Winograd glares out of the paper into the room. (Steichen's sheep have their backs turned to us.)

The Burnside collection features prints by Frank Sutcliffe, Henry Wright Dick and others, from the early 1800s on. Some of

them are more of historical than artistic interest — the garishly tinted scenes of old Russia among them. A newsboy photographed by Dick around 1900 is eloquently simple. He has also captured a vivid impression of a woman washing dishes, also around 1900, in a kitchen that looks like a prison. She stands placidly in front of her sink, softly lit by the unnatural half-sunlight that filters in through a barred window in front of her.

Also in the show is a "selection of Photo

Mechanical Processes" from the collection of Sidney Tillim. The most interesting of these is a sensitive image of Washington Irving — a carbon print by Sarony. It appears in the 1870 edition of "The Sketch Book," portraying the author's radiance, with the light catching in his cottony hair and beard.

The Usdan Gallery is at the back of the college's Visual and Performing Arts Center. It is open Monday through Friday from 1 to 5 p.m. The show continues through March 28.



Untitled
By Eliot Erwitt

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