

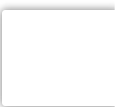
The Decisive Moment

By DeWitt Cheng | Dec 21, 2011

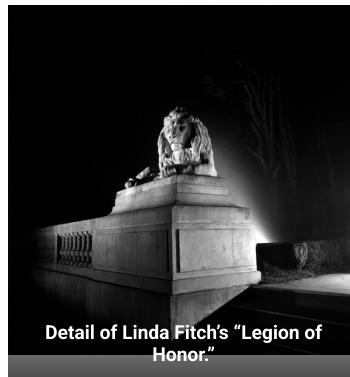


“The decisive moment,” a phrase associated with photojournalist Henri Cartier-Bresson, was a loose American translation of *Images à la Sauvette*, “images on the run” or “stolen images.” It has stuck, however, nicely conveying the idea of photographic stalking. The young Frenchman who once supported himself by hunting game in Africa later adapted his predatory methods to image capture: “I prowled the streets all day, feeling very strung-up and ready to pounce, ready to ‘trap’ life” with his Leica trigger/shutter.

Seven Bay Area Photographers Collective members undoubtedly share Cartier-Bresson’s pouncing instinct, but the détente between formerly warring “straight” and art photography and the advent of digital technology have extended the medium’s methods and methodologies without detracting from its ability to



compress and fossilize time and meaning. Nicole Hills (co-curator with Susan Rippberger): “The works in this exhibit speak not only of an event, but of the structure that lies beneath the event In this way these works speak of timelessness, the inability to hold onto the moment, and the deep richness and presence of that moment.”



Some of the artists employ soft focus to explore perception and memory; others choose sharp definition. Adrienne Defendi (also showing at SFMOMA's Artist Gallery) in her *Pentimento* series (which refers to painting revisions) and Barbara Kyne in her *Daydreams of the Coast* series depict calm seashores, though one of Defendi's images employs that immortal metaphor of transience, the Venice of gondolas and palazzos. Erin Malone (whose show at PHOTO Gallery was reviewed here recently) depicts the seashore as well, but via the archaizing print medium of photogravure, in “I Stand Amid the Roar” and “In the Wreck of Noble Lives.” Eric Larson's *Urban Impressions* series transforms hard-edged city life into an Impressionist play of reflected, refracted light. Charlotte Niel examines the female figure, clad in white, beautiful, and poignant, in elegiac pieces like “Once Upon a Time” and “When She Was Young.”

Linda Fitch and John Martin depict architecture in crisp focus. Fitch's selenium-toned silver gelatin prints of Italian classical buildings and French statuary assert the enduring appeal of the past. Martin's small color prints of wooded rolling hills (“Dream House,” “Converging Lines”) find a harmony between nature and the manmade environment that still mostly eludes us today. **Timescapes** runs through January 25 at Collaborate (431 13th St., Oakland). 510-451-1776 or CollaborateOakland.com