

In the galleries: With two group exhibits, maximum exposure for photographers

Review by Mark Jenkins

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“Lost” and “Found” are the titles of two vivid Steven Marks pictures in Studio Gallery’s annual group photography show. Those vignettes are not the only reason to call the entire exhibition “Lost/Found,” Marks notes. “The very essence of the art form is its uncanny ability to give presence to something that is absent,” he says in a statement. Indeed, “Lost/Found” would be a fitting alternate handle for “Signature Images,” the Multiple Exposures Gallery show that includes work by two artists also represented in Studio’s survey.

Most of the contributors rely on serendipity, but the selections include a few more deliberate images. Java-born Iwan Bagus embodies his heritage by posing in an inherited antique sarong, surrounded by balloons emblazoned with copies of his late mother’s final CT scan. Korea-bred Soomin Ham turns old family snapshots into layered collages, whether colorful and abstract (at Studio) or spare and lyrical (at Multiple Exposures). The former derive from flawed negatives exposed during her childhood; the latter from her grandfather’s pristine black-and-white pictures from the 1930s.

Marks’s street pictures are bright and bustling, conveying urban action with garish colors and people who blur into semiabstract shapes. They complement two very different pictures at Multiple Exposures: Sarah Hood Salomon’s shot of people alone together, clustered under bus shelters in the rain, and Eric Johnson’s more classical scene of a Capitol Hill fountain, its moving water iced by a long exposure.

Many photos in both shows depict places that are unpopulated or that isolate a single person. At Studio, Rania A. Razeq renders a dirt road through a forest as a sort of stage set, while Alexandra Silverthorne sees night as quiet yet humming with possibility. Emptiness aches in Leena Jayaswal’s still lifes of uninhabited bedrooms, although the pictures are not as bereft as Matt Francisco’s close-ups of window shades that partly shield sunlight from a friend’s longtime home that’s about to be sold.

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