

# ART



## Photo Exhibits Focus On Realism

On exhibit at the Community Arts Gallery: At right, 'Three Houses,' a photo by Stephen McCarroll; at left, one of a series of photos by Ian Dryden taken at the La Mesa Penitentiary in Tijuana.

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Once upon a time, the principal function of art seemed to be to provide its patrons and the public with an escape from the pressures of the times. The two photography exhibitions currently on view in San Diego ("Beyond the Lens" at the Community Arts Gallery and the Grossmont College Gallery's "Landscapes and Land Rapes" by Gene Kennedy) don't allow you to escape from anything. Both shows act as mirrors reflecting what the photographer (and you and I) see, and as windows on what many of us have never experienced. Some of the sights are unpleasant, but that is what most contemporary photographers are recording.

The biggest show is at the Community Arts Gallery where jurors Michael Arthur (who heads up the Center for Photographic Arts), filmmaker and gallery director Judy Salazar and artist Barbara Sexton narrowed more than 200 entries down to 101. Obviously, this show contains a wide variety of work with such diverse commentary as social reportage, personal reminiscences and political propaganda as well as landscapes, seascapes and experimental work. This isn't the greatest show in town but because it's full of work by many photographers who have never exhibited before, it deserves one's attention.

One of the first photographers on view entering the gallery is Larry Futrell's "Solitude," showing a man wearing Levi's seated on the top rung of a ladder, not at all overcome by his cluttered garage-workshop but totally immersed in viewing a program on his television set. The motorbike, old pickup truck, lawn mower, an electric fan and countless odds and ends are totally ignored.

Charles Gay's untitled photographs all are narrative depictions of life on a back porch in a black neighborhood, and, although most have been exhibited before, are worth a second look. Michael Ruggiero's black-and-white photographs of San Diego scenes, particularly "Work Out," capturing members of a football team on

their way to practice, are all low-key but effective.

The 72 color photographs under glass, some of them damaged or out of focus, are shown under the title "Lost and Found" and are accompanied by Lynn Schuette's statement which reads: "In 1977, a friend and I were relaxing in the mountains and discovered an abandoned cabin. Its inhabitants had recently moved, leaving garbage in the melting snow. I noticed some photo albums and quickly salvaged them. Several weeks later, when the photos had dried, I finally took a close look and realized what I had found."

What Schuette found are photographs of soldiers in Vietnam (posed outside their tents, marching along winding jungle trails, with Vietnamese friends, waiting to board a helicopter or firing guns). These are relieved by a handful of photographs of the folks back home — a wife? lady friend? — and children, as well as a few pictures of the soldiers themselves back home on leave in September 1971. These photographs are anything but works of art but are fascinating and emphatic statements, not only because of their content but because one soldier and his family wanted to destroy all images and memories of Vietnam by dumping them in the mountains.

Jerry Rife's color photographs of neon business signs and logos — for example, the word BUS in bright red together with art of a shimmering running greyhound — are energized, giving his work a reality other than that produced by our vision. Other Rife photographs having a Day-Glo vitality are "Tiny Dancers," "Horse and Rider" and "Boy and Hamburger."

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