

from the desk of ...

## The Rogue Scholar ... on Visual Art

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Evan Lee  
"Photographs"

Or Gallery  
103, 400 Smithe Street  
Vancouver, B.C.  
V6B 5E4

from 12 February to 11 March 2000

The international avant-garde arrived in Vancouver in the 60's with work that would ultimately transform the nature of art production. Vancouver is internationally well regarded for its artistic "school of thought", paralleled with the famed Dusseldorf school and the photographic contributions of the Beckers and their professional artistic progeny. But how does artistic evolution translate to contemporary art practice? There is a profusion of photographic images being produced both locally and internationally, defining and redefining genres as traditional as reportage to contemporary practices such as constructed tableau and, more recently, the visual "abject". The photographic works displayed in Evan Lee's exhibition do show such efforts in recording the latter stream of thought with an informed use of academic art history and theory. A black and white photograph of a pair of runners does translate a feeling of inwardness, of reflection, a testament to its existence. Similarly, the colour photographs of two balloons or a flower arrangement do seem banal, unimportant for the laborious task of recording such images for posterity. These are the common, "low" priority elements that exist in the world, devoid of presence yet nevertheless noticed. And one would posit that the lack of presence is the main criteria for these photographic records. Lee's photographs deal with his relationship to these "abjects", and in a sense reflects and records his connection to these objects of banality, no matter how close or far removed they are from his perspective. Perhaps this is the reason I felt pushed away or uninterested in the subject matter. They didn't matter much to me on any level. However, that I would need to relocate myself and ascribe a narrative to these photographs is perhaps the greater sin. In another sense, these photographs can be thought of as constructed tableaux of the banal and the unseen, that the runners, balloons and flowers were "arranged" to look a certain way; that these are photographic records of the "generic", devoid of specificity and label. I can relate to the apparent truism engaged in these photographs, but as constructed and staged photographs of the abject, they are fictitious truisms indeed.

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