

Jane Martin, Jennifer Schlesinger, Kamil Vojnar; Verve Gallery of Photography, 219 E. Marcy St., 982-5009; through July 3

Verve Gallery of Photography showcases series of images by three photographers who work in different techniques with different subjects, yet they are all anchored by a cinematic quality. What emerges from the various narratives told through the lenses of Jane Martin, Jennifer Schlesinger, and Kamil Vojnar are themes of timelessness and fate.

As Verve's director, Schlesinger wisely places her own work in the smaller of the gallery's spaces, allowing Martin's and Vojnar's photographs to take center stage. Schlesinger's *Object Diaspora* series is the most intimate work in the show. Shot with a pinhole camera, *Object Diaspora* appears to focus primarily on material things: a watch, a goblet, jewelry, gloves, a child's rocking horse. However, each object is shot in use — being worn, held, or ridden. There is a human component to the work, but the faces are never seen, the bodies suggested discreetly. In *Object Diaspora #7*, a ghostly hand emerges out of darkness to grasp a goblet, shot in close-up with enough detail to capture the intricacy of the vessel's design. The hand, by comparison, is less substantial.

Schlesinger shot the series using objects that have entered into a second life, that have outlived or been passed down from their original owners, hence the term diaspora. Their fate is



Jennifer Schlesinger: *Object Diaspora #7*, 2009, gelatin silver print, 9 x 7 inches

to move on, perhaps as antiques or heirlooms. Schlesinger understands the fetishism we have for such items. She divorces them from the context of time or place by surrounding them with darkness. The small scale of the photographs fits the sense of the personal that she achieves with her subject matter.

Martin also achieves a degree of intimacy in her work, which examines the sensuality of the female form in a sensual environment. *Closer Far Away*, the name of the series that accounts for the bulk of Martin's images at Verve, shows her models exploring a misty, fog-shrouded landscape. The mist itself, semi-obscuring the nude figures of the models, creates a kind of distance between them and the viewer, increasing their aura of mystery and attractiveness. Martin's technique of coating her archival pigment prints with resin adds a tinge of yellow to the photographs, increasing the lush warmth of the imagery even as it adds another layer of distance. Martin captures similar feelings with shots of frothy water in a four-paneled work called *Undulate I*. The softness of the foamy sea invites us to explore it with all our senses.

In each of Martin's photos in *Closer Far Away*, a lone figure moves, her back to us, and we feel compelled to follow. Something about the stance of the figure in *Closer Far Away I* — a stance that evokes a sense of animal-like alertness — speaks of an impending encounter between the female figure and something unseen. It is the most primal image in the show.

Like Schlesinger's, Martin's work is divorced from the context of time and place. It approaches the timeless quality of the mythic — which ties in to the photographs of Vojnar, in which the mythic breaks into the modern world. Vojnar, a Czech photographer now living in the south of France, creates mixed-media images that combine photography, painting, and collage. The fragmented imagery of the collage elements, often duplicated photographic images juxtaposed with one another, adds to the sense of fracture and failure, or impending failure, evoked in his work. The series, called *Flying Blind*, shows us fallen angels and would-be angels attempting flight. In one, titled *Airport*, an angel waits at the gate for her flight, perhaps resigned to fly the only way she really can, via an airplane, her wings rendered useless by her human nature. That is a consistent theme here: human endeavor versus human limitations.

Verve continues to provide Santa Fe with compelling, evocative work. Each of the series in the current show could stand on its own.



Kamil Vojnar: *Journey (Balloon)*, 2009, mixed media, 36.25 x 27.25 inches



Jane Martin: *Breath and Desire #3*, 2010, archival pigment ink print and resin mounted on wood, 24 x 24 inches

The fact that the series do not feel entirely separate means that someone made a careful decision about which artists' works should be shown together. Still, it is essential that the photographers are given their own space at the gallery rather than mixing up their images. That works at Verve, and it works well.

— Michael Abatemarco