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What's On in D.C.: Photo and Video Edition



At Curator's Office: Kathryn Cornelius, "Reach #4" (2006)

Courtesy Curator's Office

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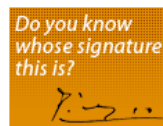
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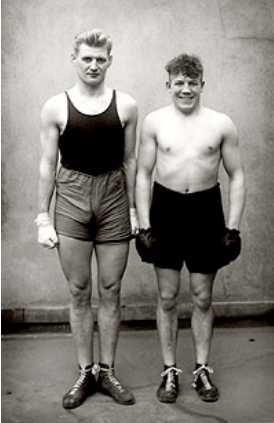


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PHOTO GALLERY
What's On in D.C.: Photo and Video Edition

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At Kathleen Ewing Gallery: August Sander, "Boxers" (1928)

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Photo by Minoru Niizuma, courtesy Lenono Photo Archive

At the National Museum of Women in the Arts: Yoko Ono performing "Cut Piece" (March 21, 1965), at Carnegie Recital Hall, New York, NY

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- Andre Kertesz**
- August Sander**
- Max Ernst**
- Ana Mendieta**
- The Face of Our Time**

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Painting may always be king, but photography and video art are giving it a run for its money in Washington, D.C., this fall. While blockbusters like the **J.M.W. Turner** show at the **National Gallery of Art** snag big crowds, some unassuming exhibitions around town show a range of what photography and video can do. Masters like Turner could spend years on a single work, but these shows are full of fleeting moments and quick compositions, in which the human condition can be explored in the click of a shutter. It's a field in which masters are lauded, amateurs are welcome, and pioneers are encouraged.

Picturing People

Tucked away in the west building of the National Gallery is "The Art of the American Snapshot, 1888–1978: From the Collection of Robert E. Jackson," through December 31. Chronicling the evolution of photography through anonymous photos, the chronologically arranged show makes the point that in the world of photography, "amateur" is not necessarily a dirty word. Presented here are strangers' moments from an era long gone, which can seem like a distant culture when, for example, infants were photographed as floating in space (held by their parents, who are disguised to blend with the background). Other shots simply capture gorgeous experiments: One collage, depicting three figures suspended in midair, evokes **Max Ernst**, while an action shot of a man beside a hovering motorcycle brings to mind **André Kertész**. All in all, there are more mementos than fine art, but some works capture lucky moments when the amateurs resembled masters.

While snapshots aim to capture people's everyday lives, **August Sander** tried to capture a people. In the early 20th century, the German photographer aimed to create a taxonomy of German "types." Many of the works were lost to Nazis and fire, but **Kathleen Ewing Gallery** is showing a sampling in "People of the 20th Century: Portraits of German Citizens, 1910–1940," on view through November 24. Like the snapshots, Sander's photos have an element of voyeurism, but are more thoughtfully composed. Included here are a pharmacist, an art dealer, a teacher, and a country band, each peering out awkwardly as if they were unsure how to present themselves.

Art in Motion

While Sander tried to freeze a population in time, newcomer **John Skwiot**, whose work is on display at **Plan B Gallery** over on 14th Street through November 18, is not slowing down. A study in motion, his shots are film stills pulled from videos taken during his frequent jogs. The results are blurred landscapes or sandy beaches (some of which the artist created on a recent trip to Brazil) that are more evocative than representational. Also on view at Plan B are abstract paintings by Anne Manley, dazed studies of horizons and other natural settings presented in swirls of earthy colors.

Some real motion can be found in the traveling exhibition "WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution," organized by the **Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles**, and now on view at the **National Museum of Women in the Arts** until December 16. Each room in the deliciously quiet, off-the-beaten-Mall-path museum presents well-known works alongside lesser-known ones such as **Mary Beth Edelson's** collages charting American women artists and **Senga Nengudi's** strangely anthropomorphic pantyhose sculptures. But the real gems lie within the dozen or so monitors in the show, which capture the genesis of an experimental era with scores of video art and performances, from **Ana Mendieta's** outdoor gunpowder spectacles to **Yoko Ono's** legendary "Cut Piece," performed at Carnegie Hall in 1965, in which the artist sat still and mute (or at least tried to) as viewers snipped away her clothing.

Next Generation

D.C.-based artist **Kathryn Cornelius** is a descendant of the "WACK!" generation, one of a line of women still proving that performance can be fine art. On view through December 22 at **Curator's Office**, a wee space in the 1515 14th St. gallery building, is her latest exhibition, "Kathryn Cornelius: Common Ground," featuring large-scale photographs and two video installations. In one video, *Return*, Cornelius appears blindfolded and swathed in what looks like a giant white towel, her arms held at her sides in a meditative stance. She's slowly walking backward, and as the camera pans out, it's evident that she's on a treadmill. This is an artist with a sense of humor.

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