

PHOTOGRAMS: UNIQUELY SIMPLE

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by Carolyn Blais

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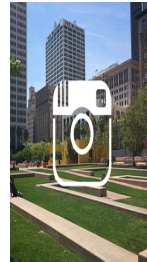
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Unfortunately a photogram is not something you can eat. Nor is it like a telegram unless of course you count the fact that a photogram just may "speak" to you and relate a message. Well what exactly is a photogram you may ask? I was recently educated myself in this matter during the opening of the exhibition "Photograms: Uniquely Simple" at the DNJ Gallery this weekend. A photogram is a kind of photograph, except not really because no cameras or lenses are involved in its making. Instead, a photogram is made when an object or objects are placed "on top of a piece of paper or film coated with light sensitive materials" that are then exposed to film or light (DNJ Gallery Press Release). While the title of the exhibit may imply simplicity, photograms can in fact yield complex images that appear to have intricate designs.

The heat wave that rolled into Los Angeles this past week did not stop locals from heading to Hollywood to check out all the cool photograms at DNJ on Saturday night. After climbing the very Grecian looking stone stairs to the second floor, I find the gallery to be packed with spectators. With complimentary Pellegrino in hand, I start to make my way through the small but pleasant space. In the first room is the work of the curator of the exhibit, Darryl Curran. Curran's personal exhibit is called "The Daily Dose" and it includes 365 autobiographic photograms that were created every day over the course of 2007. By the looks of it, 2007 must have been a productive but fun year for the artist as I can clearly make out most of the objects used to make the photograms—a hammer, leaves, a slotted spoon, a wrench, scissors, paper clips, and buttons to name a few. The pretty, pastel colors used also seem to be an indication that 2007 was a good year. For me, I would love to have some of Curran's photograms on my bedroom wall. The cheery colors and everyday objects seem to create a kind of calming ambience that would be perfect to wake up to every morning.

Moving on to the main gallery, I am met with a variety of photograms from nine other artists. Some of the first that I notice are the works of Elizabeth Bryant. Sort of reminiscent of X-rays, Bryant's two "Police Target" photograms show the outline of two men in suits or uniforms who may have swallowed a slew of different objects from knives, to birds, to lizards. These pieces are difficult to describe, so you'll have to go to DNJ to really see for yourself. While I think of Halloween when the local chiropractor would scan kids' candy through the X-ray machine to make sure some psycho didn't give out needle infested loot, I think the artist is trying to evoke a different affect—one that has to do with law enforcement and civil dis/obedience.

Lately I've thought it would be awesome to have dog. I can't afford one, nor legally have one in my apartment. But apparently artist Julia Schlosser doesn't have these issues. Either that or she is toting around items that belong to a dog in order to make a series of photograms. Her images show a tether and a leash, a dog hair, an e-collar, and K9 Advantix—everything one would need to have a Fluffy, or in this case a Tess, a C.J., and a Lucky (apparently the artist has or knows 3 dogs). These photograms are inventive and cool to look at, even if they make me long for that dog I've imagined.

The photogram exhibit will be on display until September 4th so be sure to check it out. Each artist gives new life to objects not normally seen in a creative light. The resulting images are not only interesting to look at, but uniquely developed.

Quick Look:

WHAT: "Photograms: Uniquely Simple"
WHERE: DNJ Gallery, 154 1/2 North La Brea Ave, LA 90036
WHEN: July 17-September 4
WEBSITE: www.dnjgallery.net



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