



GALLERIES

Frozen time, altered perspectives in new photo shows

By **Cate McQuaid** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT SEPTEMBER 29, 2015

Photography stops time, and no photographer has done that more succinctly than Harold “Doc” Edgerton (1903-90), the MIT electrical engineer who took the electronic flash to extraordinary heights. He captured moments, such as the corona-like backsplash of a drop of milk, that happen so quickly the eye cannot perceive them.

Sports photographers stop time, too, looking for drama. In his new show at Samson, Todd Pavlisko layers Edgerton’s vintage prints on old basketball posters, and the coupling is strangely perfect: funny, even sweet, and humming with erotic undertones and comedy.



TONY LUONG

One of Todd Pavlisko’s untitled pieces employs Harold “Doc” Edgerton’s “Dye Drop Into Milk.”

They make a cartoon of male prowess. Edgerton's explosive drops, or a bullet passing through an apple, echo the cheesy stand-ins for sex in midcentury movies, such as fireworks, or trains going into tunnels. But there's much more going on here. Many of Edgerton's images have a lyrical affinity for basketball's rhythms and movements.

One of the untitled pieces features Edgerton's "Dye Drop Into Milk," in which the drop launches vertically from the smooth surface of the milk. Pavlisko places it directly over the frame of a player leaping for the basket; we see only his feet, suspended well over the floor. The drop conveys his precision and physical eloquence, and the quiet isolation that cloaks an undistracted player at crucial moments. Plus, Edgerton's image drives home that this will be over quicker than the blink of an eye.

The photo/poster pairings all capture climactic moments, but a series of sculptures cheekily address the lulls that follow. These include flaccid, gold-plated Ray-Bans that droop over bottles of Orange Crush, and violins (crafted by luthiers!) that melt over basketballs. Violins suggest mastery, but also sentimentality and the sad sound of emotional deflation after the game is over.

As much as it represents stopping time, Pavlisko's show evokes rhythm — full, as it is, with rushes and pauses. His clever installation, in which the portions of posters obscured by the Edgerton photos appear elsewhere in the gallery, keep the eye darting around the space (even up to the rafters) the way a ball moves around a court. As in a fast-moving basketball game, there's little opportunity to lose interest.

Three visions

The crisp three-man photography show “Multiple Perspectives” at Adelson Galleries Boston skips gleefully from conceptual photography to abstraction to intensive representation. The artists bridge a generation.

Dan Peterson, in his late 50s, is the true-to-life photographer. His luminous images of mushrooms gorgeously lit against a black ground feel hyper-real because they’re composites. Peterson uses anywhere from six to 20 frames in a single shot, elucidating focus, pumping up sensuousness beyond what the eye can see.

His blushing, fleshy “Hygrophorus Coccineus” depicts a tiny specimen about a quarter-inch tall on a monumental scale, with a glowing red cap, voluptuously rippled beneath. The tiny, incidental sprig on the forest floor becomes godlike.

The abstract photographer Tristan Govignon (in his 40s) takes straightforward close-up shots of a boat in Boston Harbor. They’re so tight it’s impossible to tell what we’re looking at, and the water distorts the forms. Plus, Govignon’s circular format makes it hard to get our bearings.

A white diagonal band dominates “Jockey,” reaching across a forest-green background edged, here and there, in red — it could be a painter’s geometric abstraction, if a watery shimmer on the left and specks of wear and soil on the right didn’t tell us otherwise.

Clint Baclawski, who is in his 30s, wrestles with how we apprehend much of our world through devices. He shows us majestic natural scenes through viewfinders, such as the mountain vista in “Promised Land” — framed, cut up by a grid, so alluring you might not notice that Baclawski has flipped the

landscape beyond the camera upside down. The photo almost chides us — put down your camera and look! — but it’s a stunning image in itself, reminding us, as all the work here does, of photography’s seductions.

Masking reality

Neal Rantoul’s photos of masks in “Wild Thing” at 555 Gallery feel like a goof, but an accomplished and clever one. “Exploring Dora,” for instance, brings us nose to nose with a Dora the Explorer mask, so that its hair becomes a black backdrop for her looming, pumpkin-like face — and suddenly, the benign character has menace.

“Jack” depicts a clown mask, in profile, and the rubbery head stretches disturbingly backward, elongating the face so that, even if you like clowns, you’ll be vexed. “Moment of Introspection” captures Frankenstein’s monster with a decaying nose and shoulders swaddled in bandages. A zombie fills the out-of-focus foreground as if running away from the green fellow, but Frankenstein’s monster doesn’t give chase. He gazes downward, thoughtful as Rodin’s “The Thinker.”

“Wild Thing” also spotlights video artist Tamara Al-Mashouk’s “Angel Eye,” a seven-channel video installation about a New York psychic. The installation, gauzy with low lights, re-creates the psychic’s own space, and the video captures her as you would expect, reading tarot cards, but also putting on an unnerving singing performance in a rabbit mask. It’s to Al-Mashouk’s credit that it all comes across as part of the psychic’s very particular gestalt, rather than as madness.

TODD PAVLISKO: Hummingbird

At: Samson, 450 Harrison Ave., through Oct. 24. 617-357-7177,

www.samsonprojects.com

MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

At: Adelson Galleries Boston,

520 Harrison Ave., through

Oct. 11. 617-832-0633, www.adelsongalleriesboston.com

WILD THING

At: 555 Gallery, 555 East 2nd St., South Boston, through

Oct. 17. 857-496-7234, www.555gallery.com

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