

PHOTOGRAPHY REVIEW

At the Griffin: 'Shootapalooza,' 'hair portraits,' and going to the Mardi Gras

Three new shows take the camera to show unexpected places.

By [Mark Feeney](#) Globe Staff, Updated September 15, 2022, 2:57 p.m.



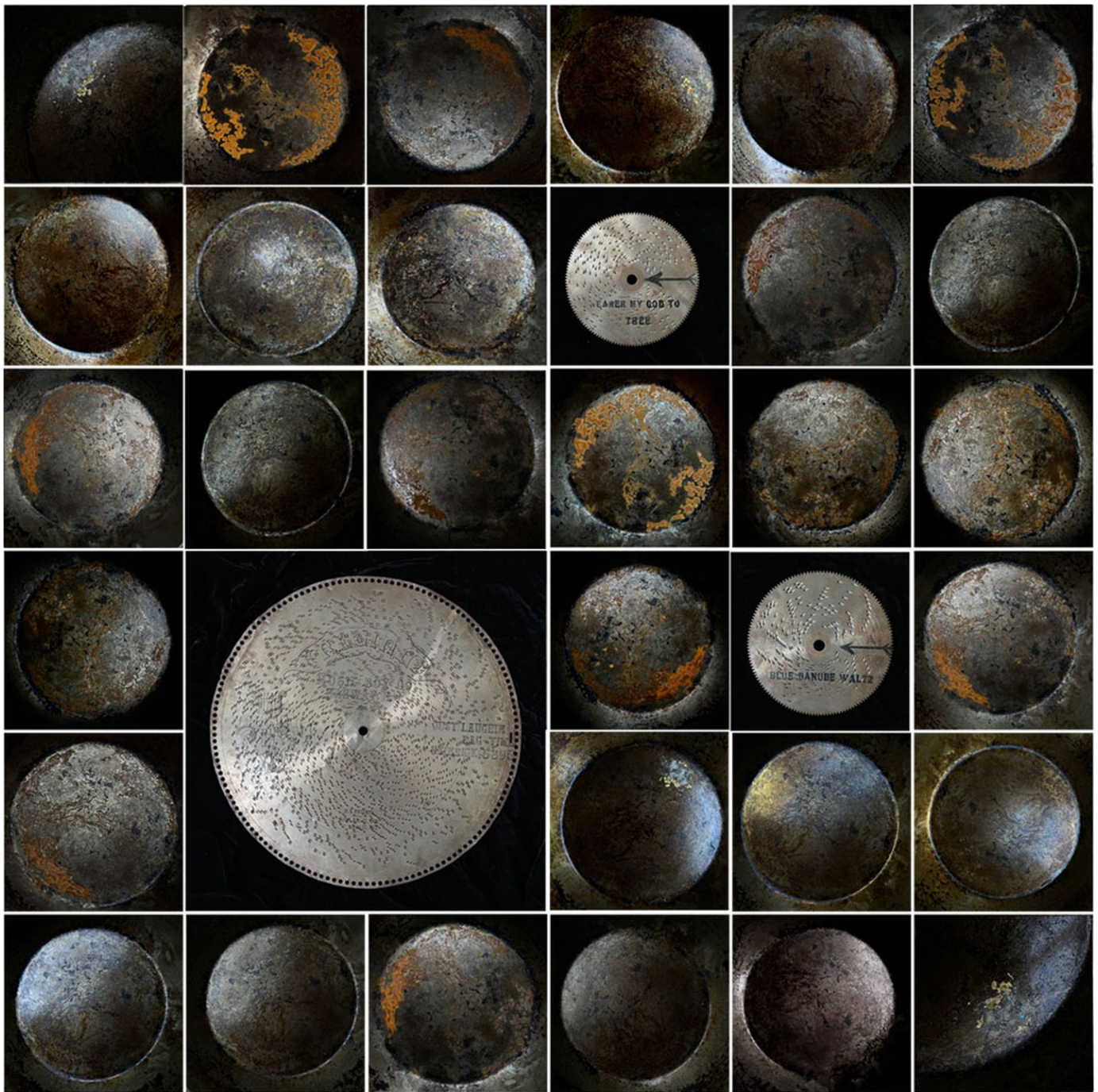
Gina Costa, "Night Stories #5" GINA COSTA

WINCHESTER — The new main show at the Griffin Museum of Photography, “Shootapalooza: A Murmuration of Artists,” consists of work from 48 members of the

Shootapalooza photographic collaborative. What they nearly all have in common is a preference for evocation over documentation, mystery rather than explanation, the implicitly surreal over the explicitly real. The interior world, of imagination and dreamscape, predominates over the exterior world, with its solidity and factuality.

The show runs through Oct. 2. The other two shows currently up at the Griffin, “Rachel Portesi: Standing Still” and “Harvey Stein: Then and There, Mardi Gras 1979,” run through Oct. 30.

Interior and exterior come together in several “Shootapalooza” photographs with an astronomical element, such as Jackie Stoken’s “Stairway to Heaven” and Jane Fulton Alt’s “Many Moons Compilation” (a closer look, though, reveals CDs and what appears to be a star chart among the orbs). Exterior *enters* interior, or seems to, in Gina Costa’s “Night Stories #5.” How did that antlered creature come to be inside that house? A number of the photographs flirt with abstraction or quasi-abstraction.



Jane Fulton Alt, "Many Moons Compilations" JANE FULTON ALT

All of which is to say that a show that looks, and is, so varied has a surprisingly coherent feel. Griffin director Crista Dix curated the exhibition.

The variety extends to printing surfaces (fabric, silk), materiality (Sandra Klein's "Eucalyptus" has tiny crystals sewn into it), and influences. Fran Forman's "Palimpsest" bows to Joseph Cornell. Ann George's "Counting Crows" is part Dutch still life and part Magritte while still all its own self.



Susan Huber, "The Tent" SUSAN HUBER

There are several photographic processes employed: cyanotype, gum bichromate, platinum/palladium. Susan Huber's "The Tent" uses the characteristic softness of platinum/palladium to understatedly spooky effect. Softness of focus recurs throughout the show, another aspect of interiority. Inner visions are so rarely precise and crisp.



Yvette Meltzer, "Spring Bursts Forth" YVETTE MELTZER

In the context of “Shootapalooza,” a photograph as ostensibly straight as Yvette Meltzer’s “Spring Bursts Forth” seems almost conservative. Yet anywhere else it’s the vibrancy of color that would stand out. And, really, if you bear in mind Dylan Thomas — [“The force that through the green fuse drives the flower”](#) — what Meltzer’s showing is another form of interiority, only externalized and gloriously so.



Rachel Portesi, "Clamp Mohawk (in small vintage frame)," 2017 RACHEL PORTESI

In “Standing Still,” Rachel Portesi also uses a range of formats: Polaroids, 3-D imagery, and, primarily, tintypes for her series of “hair portraits.” There are more than three dozen on display, and in a wide range of sizes. Portesi photographs models whose hair she has elaborately sculpted. The settings will often contain dried flowers, plants, and botanical items. Sometimes the hair will, too. The idea is to connect within the frame a human world of artifice with elements of the natural world. Portesi places many of the portraits in antique frames, furthering the effect of unreality.



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The title of Harvey Stein's "Then and There, Mardi Gras 1979" is self-explanatory. The

show consists of 20 portraits Stein took with his SX-70 Polaroid of Mardi Gras participants in that year. The choice of format was fitting. Few things were as of the '70s as the SX-70. Seeing that unmistakable squarish shape, white borders, and vibrant, slightly unnatural colors sets [the wayback machine](#) for 1979, all right.

In addition to the white borders, the photos have large white mattes, so the colors really pop. Stein's presentation is straightforward: tight close-ups. With their make-up and wigs and exotic millinery, the revelers are themselves anything but straightforward. Stein's framing is sober, which makes what's within the frame seem that much more inebriate. The woman with a painter's palette for a hat is a real kick.

The show is festive, which is fitting, since the Griffin is having a celebration of its own. It's turning 30. There's a small exhibition of photographs by its namesake founder inside, as well as several pop-up displays outside the museum building.

For information on anniversary events, go to the museum's website.

SHOOTAPALOOZA: A Murmuration of Artists

RACHEL PORTESI: Standing Still

HARVEY STEIN: Then and There, Mardi Gras 1979

At Griffin Museum of Photography, 67 Shore Road, Winchester, through Oct. 2 ("Shootapalooza") and Oct. 30. 781-729-1158, griffinmuseum.org

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