

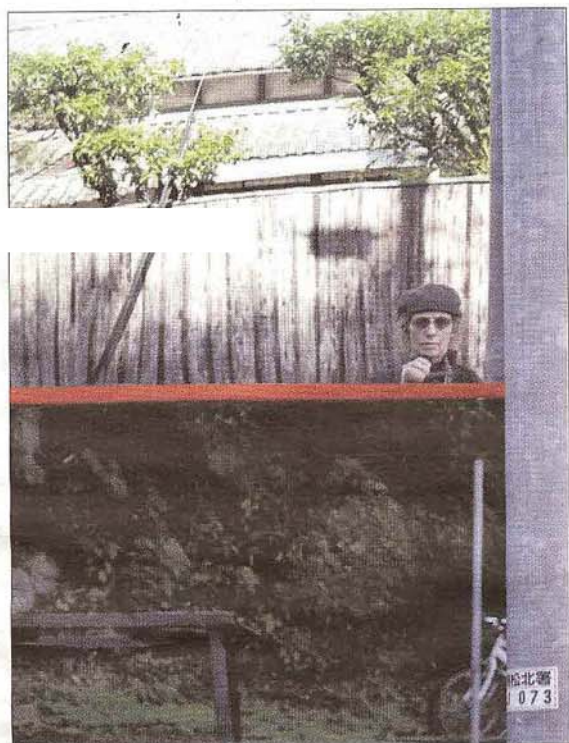
The New Mexican's Weekly Magazine of Arts, Entertainment & Culture



April 5, 2013

Pasatiempo





Looking through the glass with Bonnie Bishop

In Greek mythology, Persephone is the goddess of earthly renewal, queen of the underworld, and the daughter of Olympian ruler Zeus and Demeter, goddess of the harvest. Persephone's image is celebrated in everything from Etruscan terra cotta urns and Athenian tondo paintings to the work of American painter Thomas Hart Benton and modern-day sidewalk art. At the end of March, Chiaroscuro Contemporary celebrated the return of spring and the beginning of its new exhibition season with the fourth annual *Spring Thaw* group show. Persephone won't be there in body — or paint, or sculpture, or mixed media — but she'll be there in spirit. The show continues through April 27.

Each year, Chiaroscuro brings together gallery and guest artists for the eclectic exhibit featuring new works in an array of mediums. This year's roster includes colorful wall sculptures by Chip Dunahugh, mixed-media abstract paintings by Katherine Chang Liu, figurative oil paintings by Michele Mikesell (from her *Freezing the Octopus* series), and large-scale abstract paintings by Colleen Drake.

Longtime Santa Fe resident Bonnie Bishop is the only artist contributing photographic work to this year's show. Her large-scale images of windows, which she describes as conveying "the mystery behind the parted curtain," are like hypnotic glimpses into gently rippling gazing pools. *Pasatiempo* caught up with Bishop, who talked about her photographs in the exhibit, which are derived from a series of images taken in Kyoto.

Pasatiempo: What first drew you to photography? Did you have mentors?

Bonnie Bishop: In 1973, after graduating from college, I accompanied a *National Geographic* photographer, Macduff Everton, to Yucatán, Mexico. He gave me my first camera and taught me how to operate it. During the next six months I discovered light, shadow, tone, color, and movement through a lens. I return to Mexico often. The unexpected juxtaposition of colors and the grit of the country are inspiring. I always find something curiously beautiful to photograph when I travel. Probably, because of my background in printmaking, I often see images as a series. I like the movement and tension grouped images create, the way they complete a story.

Pasa: Is there a common thread in your photographic work?

Bishop: A consistent theme in my photography and printmaking is translucence, the passage of light. I photograph light filtered through objects — fabric, tea bags, dresses, drapes, leaves, windows. I'm interested in the bare bones of an object. Like making an X-ray, I'm exposing its essential nature. I aim for the combination of beautiful and haunting.

Pasa: Texture and depth play large roles in the photographs' mysteriousness. It's almost like looking through mist with broken glasses on. What attracted you to windows?

Bishop: In 1980, I was walking through a neighborhood in La Veta, Colorado, and a windowsill with carefully arranged tchotchkes caught my attention. I was curious. What is the meaning of these objects to their collector? Why these choices — sentimental? Aesthetic? I am drawn to the mystery behind a slightly parted curtain. What is revealed? What is meant to be hidden? I enjoy the covert act of peering into a scene from another's life. When the image is reversed and seen by me, how is it transformed? In my window series I'm turning the tableau around, shooting the still lives of windows from the outside in.

Pasa: What was it about certain windows in Kyoto that inspired you so much?

Bishop: Because of my interest in minimal art, architecture, and photography, I headed to the art island of Naoshima, Japan, [home to many museums] to celebrate my 60th birthday. My other destination was Kyoto where I photographed the *Kyoto Window* series in 2010. Many traditional homes in Japan are built directly beside the road and patterned glass is used to provide privacy. The differing textures of the windows create diffuse, abstract, pointillistic, and translucent images. By printing them large they become life-size and offer the viewer an experience similar to peering through a window. ◀

details

- ▼ *Spring Thaw*, fourth annual group exhibit
- ▼ Reception 5 p.m. Friday, April 5; exhibit through April 27
- ▼ Chiaroscuro Contemporary Art, 702½ and 708 Canyon Road, 992-0711