

"Suburban seen: PCA&D embraces the ordinary"

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Boys playing video games. Squatting birds. Floor plans for airports. Paint buckets. There's a lot to see at the new exhibit at Pennsylvania College of Art & Design. But perhaps the most powerful part of the exhibit is its premise of featuring artists who live outside the state's major metropolitan areas - Philadelphia and Pittsburgh - who also are doing interesting, original work, hence "Outside the Centers/On the Edge," the exhibit's title. The show also seeks to feature art institutions "outside the centers" and the show has appeared or will appear at four venues in addition to PCA&D, including Kutztown University, Bucknell University, Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art and Erie Art Museum. The show was conceived by PCA&D's Gallery Director, Kristy Krivitsky, who said that if you're an artist who doesn't live in New York City, "you're kind of invisible." As the show is displayed in PCA&D's main gallery, the 15 participating artists have a chance to shine. Their work seems to have an extra glow and intrigue when viewed through the lens of the show's theme. The show is accompanied by a comprehensive portfolio that includes artist statements, but the title of the show itself is enough to provoke a distinct reaction to the work. "Outside the Centers" seems to beg the question of what possibly can be found in the ordinary, and when viewed with that question in mind, the work pops with beautiful, poignant ideas and images. Lancaster-area artist Shauna Frischkorn's photographs of teenage boys playing video games are perhaps the most moving example. Photographed in the dark, with only their faces illuminated, the boys are shockingly beautiful to look at. Their clothing and jewelry hints that their typical video-gaming environment might include a bedraggled basement or otherwise unsavory surroundings, but when all of that is removed, they are a marvel to look at. Zack, who is playing Crash Bandicoot, has pimples dotting his chin and cheeks and peach fuzz. But in Frischkorn's image, he is suddenly - obviously - regal, heroic. By removing the noise around him, Frischkorn has made the beauty of this awkward teen pop. A painting by PCA&D alumnus Carl Gustafson, "The Hallway #3," raises similar questions of what beauty is hidden in the ordinary. In the oil painting, a blur of a man is in the center of an industrial hallway, maybe one you'd stumble on by accident in the back of an apartment house. The man's movement literally disturbs the boring, staid space around him. It is as if the vibrancy of him simply being alive is causing a ripple in the air, like it is otherwise set in an unmoving gel. Has he been thrown in from somewhere else? Is that what happens when being on the "outside" for too long simply makes you burst? This show is a joy to see, particularly in a gallery that is so subject to the ordinary - cars waiting at the light on Prince Street, ugly flooring, the door swinging open - and so embracing of it here.