



Inset: Photographer Ramu Aki (left) and friend. **Above:** Aki photo of tree with words filtering through the limbs.

trees seem to me great planetary dancers under & mid body dancers with an explosive expressive abandon, such as i only witness from time-to-time amongst blessed young people whose adult(s) are so present that spontaneous joyous, improvised expression can be savored in the situational moment along with for & thru the child; right up against that root-steady commitment of trees to stand & do for all of us everything trees stand there & do, I perceive engenders & nurtures a stimulating, often amusing dramatic tension & poignancy which i find wondrous & beautiful

—RAMU AKI

Photog of the mundane, artist of the moment

BY ED BOWERS

ON display at the Faithful Fools Court Gallery is an exhibition of digital photography by photog/poet Ramu Aki that is unique, due not only to the intensity of the work, but also because of its innovative presentation.

This show is billed as a “progressive” exhibit. Over the course of its run the photographer will be adding images to his exhibit, causing his presentation to grow organically, much as the flowering of a plant.

The photos on display are not museum pieces as much as living, breathing parts of a continually changing whole. The viewer can see this show once, but probably not ever see it exactly the same way again.

This adventurous concept that Aki has added to the art of gallery exhibition I find

fascinating and much admire. It breathes life into what ordinarily would be regarded as a finished product, static and unchangeable; this progressive method piques curiosity and adds an open-ended quality to the normal presentation of art.

Anyone who lives in San Francisco should view this exhibit. Aki considers San Francisco to be the most beautiful city in the whole wide world and his photographs express that belief. They glow with vibrant colors, clear transparent images, and take in the length and breadth of what many refer to, ironically given current U.S. history, as Baghdad by the Bay.

The moment is alive only for a moment, as fast as the speed of light, possibly not even long enough to register by the conscious mind, so most of us remain trapped in the fading black and white images of the past. The photographs on display here are as close to any I have ever seen at capturing with clarity the explosion of a moment that will never be witnessed again, but on a deep level of awareness, remains eternally alive.

Many of the photographs are of inanimate objects that are taken for granted and seen daily on the street, of trees and mannequins and even graffiti written on concrete in vibrant green paint. But there is nothing inanimate about them. All have been transformed by the art of digital photography into creatures with personalities and souls.

There's an edginess about these photos of objects. It's almost as though a life is trapped inside them that could explode any second and escape. Aki expresses visually the philosophy of animism where anything that is, is alive. His walls breathe, trees stretch their

trunks to the azure sky and filter human words between their grasping limbs. Each photo addresses the viewer with a radiant individual life force.

As for the photographs of people, ranging from the civic-minded with smiles on their faces to dilapidated, prematurely old junkies sitting on the street sucking on cigarettes, each is revealed as containing the same vibrating beauty as a tree, a skyscraper or a wall.

Everything is equal in Aki's photographic memory. Everything is life. Everything is consciousness.

That's what I've always loved about San Francisco. In spite of its problems, it's so full of life. Most zones attempt to control and manipulate and drain the uncontrollable spirit out of its citizens for the sake of efficiency, productivity, commerce, and safety. But San Francisco cultivates a special relationship with this spirit that Mr. Aki has captured perfectly.

I would recommend to anyone feeling alone in a dead world to expose himself to the life revealed and released by these photographs. He might be transformed and renewed. These photographs have the ability to alter consciousness regarding habitual ways of seeing ordinary things in an extraordinary world.

And that's the real purpose behind all great art.

The photographs of Ramu Aki will be on exhibition indefinitely at The Faithful Fools Court at 234 Hyde St. If a transformational experience is what you are looking for then this is one show that you shouldn't miss.

Plus, this is the holiday season and these photographs are being sold right off the rack, and would make fabulous gifts. Their price is \$5 for a small photo and \$20 for a large. Ramu is making his art available to everyone.

So take advantage of this beautiful opportunity while it lasts. ■

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