



72 Dragono Arts



America's Largest Photo Biennial, FotoFocus, Turns Strange.

The sixth edition of FotoFocus, which opens on September 29 in Cincinnati, will feature more than 600 artists. This time, the topic is “World Record,” which denotes both setting records and maintaining a log of events.

Kevin Moore says, “This idea of setting records, The Guinness Book of World Records, is so much about the hubris of mankind. What was once seen as heroic — the longest time spent underwater, the farthest journey in the snow — now it all seems basically destructive”

Australian artist Ian Strange uses the terms “world record” in both senses of the word. His photographs of homes in Australia, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Japan, and the United States are on display at the Art Academy of Cincinnati. They illustrate how our attitudes toward housing are evolving as a result of the economy's and climate's record-breaking changes.

Moore also added, “His work is about the social aftermath of the way capitalism rolls through cities, Housing is a sentimental, common, universal theme, but I like the way he treats it all over the world in different countries and different circumstances, from earthquakes in Christchurch to urban and suburban blight in states like Ohio.”

In the past, Strange has painted entire houses bright red, just like photographers do with their negatives,



and produced light displays that are reminiscent of Rene Magritte's paintings from the Empire of Lights series (1953–1954), which simultaneously portray day and night. For the exhibition, he is now working on a news series of pieces examining homes in Cincinnati. He wants to find out where the stone and wood used to make them came from.

Strange said, "I'm really interested in looking at how a home might actually be a kind of material record of a place and a material record of land and landscape as well, particularly if it's a local story"

The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, which was constructed on a river between Kentucky and Ohio (a northern state), is one of more than 100 locations taking part in the Biennial (a southern state).

'If you were escaping slavery you crossed that river to freedom,' Moore explained. 'They have a slave pen reconstructed in the lobby.'

Deborah Willis and Cheryl Finley are the curators of the exhibition at that location, "Free as They Want to Be": Artists Committed to Memory. About 25 artists are involved, and they all address the idea of memory in some way, including J.P. Ball's background as the black studio photographer who resided in Cincinnati in the 19th century. It also has pieces by photographers Bisa Butler, Catherine Opie, and Carrie Mae Weems who captured monuments in the South during the pandemic.

Moore, who now resides in New York but was born and raised in Kansas City, claimed that the Midwest had provided the biennial with "an appreciative and sophisticated audience." Compared to New York, it seems more genuine. In New York and San Francisco, it's simple, but in Cincinnati, it feels like your effort might be making a difference and having purpose.

Houston's FotoFest, a similarly misspelt American photo biennial, just revealed the 23 artists who will be featured in their main exhibition If I Had a Hammer, which will be on display from 24 September to 6 November.



Elaine W. Ho, Jibade-Khalil Huffman, Dionne Lee, Liz Rodda, and Fred Schmidt-Arenales are among the new commissions included in the exhibition, which was co-curated by Amy Sadao, Steven Evans, and Max Fields.

Additionally, Mark Sealy's show *African Cosmologies: Redux*, which was originally scheduled for 2020, and *Ten by Ten: Ten Reviewers Choose Ten Portfolios from the Meeting Place 2020-21* will both be included at FotoFest.

Citation :

<https://ocula.com/magazine/art-news/fotofocus-americas-largest-photo-biennial-2022/>