

The Boston Globe

PHOTOGRAPHY REVIEW

The joys of juxtaposition

That informs much of the work and how it's displayed in the Photographic Resource Center's 'For a Moment: Images from the Boston Photo League.'

By [Mark Feeney](#) Globe Staff, Updated October 24, 2023, 4:57 p.m.



Darlene DeVita, "The Hand, Cuba," 2017. DARLENE DAVITA

In the case of the Photographic Resource Center's "For a Moment: Images from the Boston Photo League," "moment" is a low-ball estimate for viewing. Anyone who stops by the VanDernoot Gallery at Lesley University is likely to spend moments extended and multiple looking at the work of the 10 photographers in the show. It runs through Nov. 18.



Kate Flock, "Rest," 2020. KATE FLOCK

[The Boston Photo League](#) is a collective of local female and nonbinary photographers with an emphasis on photojournalism and documentary photography. The league takes its inspiration from New York's [Photo League](#), which notably, and nobly, pursued socially conscious photography from 1936 to 1951. The quality of the Photo League's work sets the bar quite high for any counterpart. A fair number of images in "For the Moment" suggest that, for Boston, quite high doesn't mean too high.



All the photographs are 16 inches by 20 inches or the reverse. None is framed or matted. This lends them an informal quality that can make the images seem that much more immediate.

The curators, the PRC's Jessica Burko and Faith Ninivaggi, have hung the show with unobtrusive shrewdness. Kate Flock's four color photographs taken at Massachusetts General Hospital of medical personnel dealing with the pandemic early in 2020 face three black-and-white photographs taken by Lisa Abitbol of Trump supporters in New Hampshire in 2020 and, more to the point, one of an anti-vaccination demonstrator in (of all places) Cambridge a year later.

Lisa Abitbol, "Londonderry, NH," 2020. LISA ABITBOL



The juxtaposition of color with black and white is also the case for the adjacent hangings of Jaypix Belmer's trio of "conceptual studio portraits," from their "Black Liberty" series, with Marissa Fiorucci's trio of black-and-white studio portraits. In the former, a heavily made-up Black model stares into the camera, draped in the US flag. (Flags figure in several of Abitbol's photographs, too, speaking of subtle connections.) The portraits are arrestingly performative. So are Fiorucci's, though more obliquely. There the stylization is lyrical rather than political.

Jaypix Belmer, "Black Liberty #2," 2017. JAYPIX BELMER



There's a similar black-and-white/color contrast with six photographs from [Collin Howell](#) and three from [Meredith Nierman](#), which hang cater-corner from each other. Both show a specific child and are part of a series. With Howell, the child is a girl, Sage, the photographs all taken in 2012. Nierman's "Godson" series is, as the title indicates, about a boy. The examples in the show are from 2016, 2019, and 2021.

"Sage V" impressively balances an array of elements: Sage herself, in profile, holding a rake; a truck; a chicken coop; another rake, leaning against the coop; and a dog. The subject is as much the context of a life as the young person living it

Marissa Fiorucci, "Lucy," 2018. LISA FIORUCCI.



Collin Howell, "Sage V," 2012. COLLIN HOWELL

Changes in time really matter with small children, especially as they become less-small children. There's that wonderfully titled Grace Paley short story "Enormous Changes at the Last Minute." Here it's enormous changes at every minute. Nierman, as the boy's godmother, is very much attuned to those changes. The boy seen in "Bath Time Protest," from 2016, is both the same one seen in "Taking Flight," from 2021, and very different.



Meredith Nierman, "Bath Time Protest," 2016. MEREDITH NIERMAN

She's not letting either visit go to visual waste. In the most striking photograph, "The Hand," taken in Cuba, in 2017, there's a further juxtaposition, with one of the most famous images of the second half of the last century, [Josef Koudelka](#)'s "Wenceslas Square, Prague, 22 August 1968," of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.



Both "here" and "there" take on a very different, or at least enlarged, meaning with Cassandra Klos's three color photographs of the Mars Desert Research Station, in the Utah desert. The idea behind the station is to re-create Martian conditions on Earth.

Cassandra Klos, "Home is Here, Home is There," 2020. CASSANDRA KLOS

The title of "Home is Here, Home is There" underscores that here-ness and there-ness. The image bearing that title, which shows from behind two Martian explorers in training, is at once spooky, comical, and straightforward. That's a hard visual parlay to pull off. Klos does.



Lauren Owens Lambert, "Saltmarsh Sparrow I - the bird," 2022. LAUREN OWENS LAMBERT

Lauren Owens Lambert's three color photographs — of a saltmarsh sparrow, a saltmarsh sparrow's nest, and a wave filled with river herring — pull off an even harder visual parlay. They're delicate and declarative both. That's especially so with the photo of a sparrow seen through a scientific instrument that reads a transponder on the bird's leg. It serves very nicely as a kind of circular frame.



Jessica Rinaldi, "Bristol Motor Speedway," 2017. JESSICA RINALDI/THE BOSTON GLOBE

Last, though far from least, is Jessica Rinaldi. Jess is a Globe colleague and friendly acquaintance, so my praise might seem suspect. Not that any plumping from me is needed: She won the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for feature photography. Now it's true that the Pulitzer board does make the occasional dubious selection. That was definitely not the case with Jess.

Each of her three color photographs is a knockout. Notice in the background of "Bristol Motor Speedway" the guy on top of his motorcycle, flying through the air with the greatest of unease. Notice the wise-beyond-her-years expression on the face of the girl in "Area 51 Dancers." Or, speaking of juxtapositions, the presence of parrot, parrot's owner, their shadows, a guy on a bike, and Dorchester Bay in "Castle Island." Look at them for a moment, and you'll find yourself wanting to look for many more moments.

FOR A MOMENT: Images from the Boston Photo League

At Photographic Resource Center, VanDernoot Gallery at Lesley University, 1815 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, through Nov. 18. www.prcboston.org, 617-975-0600,]. Mark Feeney can be reached at mark.feeney@globe.com.