



Mary Voelz  
Chandler

## Voelz Chandler: Photo show mines the mind

November 26, 2004

Think about this morning, about that brief moment of half-awake /half-asleep, when the brain wasn't quite sure whether the light was real or a dream. That is perhaps the best way to describe the impact of "Anxiety and Desire: A Photographic Map of the Psyche."

Although supporting materials for the exhibition stress a psychoanalytical foundation, the last show of the fall's Month of Photography stands on its own as an exploration of process and content on the road less traveled. (Those theories include work by psychoanalysts Felix Guattari and Jacques Lacan, who addressed the relationship between desire and anxiety; that is, if the former is not satisfied, the latter results.)

### Advertisement

An advertisement for Global Career Management. At the top is a blue circle logo above the text "GLOBAL CAREER MANAGEMENT". Below this is a photograph of three business professionals (two men and one woman) in an office setting. To the right of the photo, the text reads "Executives Managers Professionals" in bold, followed by "Competing in the Big Leagues?" in a smaller font. At the bottom, it says "Put Global Career Management to work for you to:" followed by a bulleted list: "• Increase Salary, Achieve Career Goals, Shorten Job Search, Maximize Job Satisfaction".

The exhibition began years ago, when Kathy Andrews, the then- new director of Metropolitan State College of Denver's Center for Visual Art, was talking to faculty about future shows.

Recalls guest curator Clare Cornell, assistant professor of digital imaging at Metro: "I said 'Show me something that I don't have to go to L.A. to see.'" That earned him the job of doing a show, which became "Anxiety and Desire." Cornell, whose own work addresses gender issues and

identity, weighed material by investigating gallery offerings elsewhere and reaching out to other photographers who teach.

The result is better seen than dissected, especially innovative (and eerie) medically-based work by Mark Kessell and one-step-from-voyeurism material by Cinthea Fiss.

Kessell, a doctor who finds chilly beauty in surgical instruments, is represented by two series: "Florilegium" involves the use of large-scale silver-plate daguerrotypes (and prints taken from those images) turning tools into sculptural forms, while "To Be Determined" depicts ghostly young people in emotional distress.

Fiss moves away from in-your-face provocation (employing homeless men as beefcake-like models) into a progression of revelation. In "Bed Ridden," she has shot images off the TV screen of actors in bed, from those serene in sleep to others who exhibit physical or mental distress. Discomfort at looking at anguish is at a remove, though not completely.

These create the base on which the rest of the show stands, though from there things become a little less sure-footed.

Mary Beth Heffernan's "Corpus Inductum" series involves the use of poultry skin to suggest various painterly depictions of Christ's loincloth, a ghostly and repetitive exercise in solidifying the ethereal.

Robert Flynt's overlay of image on image - mixing the psychological with the archival - is a bit like channeling a seance, while Leta Evaskus' "40 Bodies" is a large grid of torsos "revealed" by portions of X-rays.

Donna Tracy's layering of computer images to create vaguely sexual animal parts works as a study in texture (though someone needs to untangle the text supposedly amplifying this work). And Clarissa Sligh's *Wrongly Bodied Two*, a book on the life of a woman becoming a man, is lost here, since only one page is on view, and one page is not a process.

Still, Cornell's inclusion of Kessell's and Fiss' work is a gift, a desire fulfilled, if not without anxiety.