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art scene

Real-life dialogues

PHOTOGRAPHERS KEITH FISHMAN AND JOAN ALMOND MAKE FOR COMPLEMENTARY GALLERY MATES

TOGETHER/alone, photographs by Keith Fishman and Joan Almond

When: Through Feb. 22

Where: Staton-Greenberg Gallery, 15 W. Anapamu St.

Gallery hours: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday

Information: 962-9867

By Josef Woodard
NEWS-PRESS CORRESPONDENT

One of the photographers tends to shoot people in exotic locales, while the other leans toward unpopulated, mysterious views of commonplace and often local, sites. One creates softly textured, pictorial prints, the other likes prickly clarity. For all their differences, photographers Joan Almond and Keith Fishman manage to be complementary gallery mates.

"TOGETHER/alone" takes care to point out their separate interests, with certain sections of the gallery given over to particular interests of either artist. But the show also finds them overlapping, especially when creating images in which hints of abstraction and carefully-observed reality converge. Almond's "Casbah Street, Finihrir, Morocco" evokes a sense of site-specific mystery, while also keying off the visual intrigue of the photo's concentric rectangles peering down a hallway.

On the same wall, Fishman's "Abandoned Shirt" captures an ephemeral and formal beauty in its deceptively simple shot of a sunlit shirt on the line in a grungy, shadowy yard.

There are other telling, comparative juxtapositions in the show. Fishman's airy series of four images, "First Clearing, Ventura Coast," presents a peripheral view of the ocean vista via cloudy skies hovering above the ocean's surface. Adjacent to that, Almond's weirdly striking "Whale's Eye View, Perce, Quebec" is a nearly submerged view of wavy ocean water and a slip of yonder land, with a palpable sense of "being there."



COURTESY PHOTOS
Keith Fishman's "Cold Springs Bridge."

Almond, based in Malibu, is an itinerant and



Joan Almond's "Lighting the Candles."

abidingly curious photographer who often brings back visual records of her travels. One wall features sensitive portraits of humble Moroccan women.

A recurring theme for Almond concerns the presence of hands, sometimes as disembodied and sometimes leaning in to convey the tacit intimacy of held hands. In her image "Lighting the Candles, Church of St. Mary, Jerusalem," she relies on particulars of photographic process, as its figures on a candle-lined stairway blur into apparition-like wisps. Fleeting humanity contrasts with the clean, rational compositional design.

Fishman, based in Carpinteria, has had work in group shows here before, but seeing a sizable segment of his work offers a broader picture of what he's about. Often, he's keen to discover expressive power through minimalistic sparseness of vision. "Cold Spring Bridge," seen from the gallery window, consists of a lonely, diagonal arch flung across the picture plane.

"Gloves" is a clever, fool-the-eye conundrum, spontaneously observed. Compositionally, it takes the form of a flag, with white gloves hanging in a window, blended in with and the erratic checkerboard of a tiled wall.

Delving yet further into Fishman's apparent aim of pursuing the transcendent in the mundane, "Road Stripe" manages to turn its overhead view of a road into a poetic puzzle.

Intersecting line and shadow engage in a dialogue with the warm grit and texture of asphalt, in what could be an ode to the incidence of accidental beauty in the world we experience daily.

That very idea, in fact, may be the underlying thread binding these two impressive, disparately inspired artists. They use the medium of photography as a means by which to see the world anew.