

ALMANAC WEEKLY

Waxing poetic

Posted by [Paul Smart](#) on December 14, 2012 in [Art](#), [Events](#)



Rita Bernstein, Before the Move

The Hudson Valley has been a hotbed for visual art in the encaustics medium for years now. The initial reasoning is simple: R & F Paints, in Kingston, is one of the world's leading manufacturers of the beeswax-and-pigment combinations, as well as a leading school for artists seeking to introduce the ancient form – which adds layers of translucence (and possible new imagery) to base works (and reaches back, historically, to ancient Greek art).

Another factor has been the growing tendency amongst those working with photographs to find new ways of manipulating their imagery. The old days of the photo as captured truth are long gone; and concurrent with both the emergence of digital manipulation as a worthy artistic tool and the resurgence of archaic photo processes as a means of personal expression comes a whole new genre of art photography enamored with the various ways in which encaustics can add literal layers of other forms and processes to what one does, allowing the photograph itself to become merely a tool in a greater, more fluid means of making art.

Starting this Saturday, December 15, Galerie BMG in Woodstock is hosting its own group exhibition of photo artists working with encaustics, to run into February. And like so much that this beautiful, intimate and friendly gallery does, it places an emphasis on pictorial beauty over concept and plays to a feminine lightness within the work to be shown.

Leah Macdonald, who has been with BMG for years now, creates sensuous narratives of women, while Rita Bernstein invokes dreamlike explorations of the complex mysteries of the human psyche. These ephemeral bookends of the new show encompass more traditional botanical compositions by Christa Kreeger Bowden, portraits by Hope Kahn and photomontage landscapes by Kara Taylor – although everything on view treasures exploration and depth of personal narrative over the purely pretty.

This, like all that BMG's Bernard Gerson curates and shows, is art with a capital A, geared toward age-old attributes of ageless beauty, layered understanding and the search for spiritual knowledge (without a religious bent, mind you). The high concepts and ironies of the contemporary scene are, by and large, not the dominant forces in these gentler works.

"PhotoEncaustics," reception Saturday, December 15, 5-7 p.m., on view December 14-February 11, Friday-Monday 12 noon-5 p.m., Galerie BMG, 12 Tannery Brook Road, Woodstock, (845) 679-0027, www.galeriebmg.com.