

THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

Art

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Photographers frame female issues

By Edward J. Sozanski
INQUIRER ART CRITIC

Faces of childhood. Rita Bernstein is another photographer interested in intangibles, particularly the dichotomy between actions

and thoughts. Sometimes what we do reflects what we're thinking, but at other times the gap is too wide to bridge.

Bernstein's photographs, on view in the Challenge exhibition at the Fleisher Art Memorial, deftly express the presence of this dichotomy, even when its exact nature can't be expressed.

Bernstein finds her most fruitful situations among children and adolescents, often in family-album-style interactions.

Sometimes thought and action appear obvious, as in the photo of a boy aiming a suction-cup arrow at the head of an unsuspecting young girl, perhaps his sister. A child lying on a pier poking the water with a stick embodies daydreaming, as does a girl lying on a lawn beneath a clothesline.

Bernstein's black-and-white prints are similar in psychological mood to some of those in "Ophelia Rising" — she photographed girls combing their mother's hair — but her pictures

are generally more successful in touching chords of recognition.

Perhaps this is because her images feel more candid, and also because she doesn't force us to guess what she's doing.

Fleisher Art Memorial, 719 Catharine St. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays through Fridays and, when classes are in session, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays; 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturdays. Through March 9. 215-922-3456 or www.fleisher.org.