

Exhibition Re-Seeing the Permanent Collection

NEWS



"Motel" by Joachim Brohm

The exhibition "Re-Seeing the Permanent Collection: The Viewer's Voice" engages individuals from the museum's campus audience in an experiment of interpretation. A work of art can elicit countless reactions and readings, depending on the perspective of the viewer. This exhibition provides a platform for Marquette University students, faculty, and staff from across the academic disciplines to share their observations about objects from the museum's permanent collection. Eddie M. Guzman, Associate Director, Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program, Educational Opportunity Program, wrote this about Motel by Joachim Brohm:

The first thing that jumps out at me when viewing Joachim Brohm's "Motel", is the stark contrast between the deteriorating condition of the inner city set against the prominent backdrop of the downtown skyline. The broken parking sign, the shattered glass on the sidewalk, and the graffiti inscribed on the wall of the dark building signal a neighborhood beset by crime and vandalism. Observing the man with the plaid shirt, armed with a trash container, looking down at the object possibly thrown to cause destruction, I'm left wondering how often he is out there, cleaning up debris and putting up with all the riffraff.

In addition, the three motel signs convey the sense of desperation. Each sign lurches out at different eye levels, competing to grab the attention of the oncoming traffic. Each offers a different message—the tall sign publicising the cost of \$18 per couple; the midlevel sign adding the words INN TOWNE; and the third, attached to the building, highlighting a restaurant and lounge. Each message conjures up images of affordable lodging with the added conveniences of dining and lounging. Those images, however, are ultimately obliterated and replaced by images of seediness, shadiness, and crime.

And then, there is the downtown skyline, just past the railroad tracks, carrying the promise of better tomorrows. This photograph could have been shot in any of the big cities, New York, Chicago, D.C., even our very own Milwaukee (I'm thinking from the corner of National and South 1st, looking north). And while the photo may have been taken in 1984, it could have been shot yesterday.

Driving across the 16th Street Viaduct to work every day and seeing Marquette from just beyond the distance, I think of those folks living in the near South Side and wonder if they look at Marquette in the same way. Having worked with low-income, first-generation students, this photo keeps me grounded as to the hardships and challenges of the students we serve. Growing up living in this type of neighborhood, you look past the present everyday despair and dream of a better life.



11.21.13

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