

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Photographer explores dualities in 'Exposures'

By Matt Nagle
Tacoma Weekly

Philippe Mazaud's photography, now on view at Rebecca V Gallery in a collection called "Exposures," provides a fascinating study in contrasts and contradictions. This all black and white exhibit shows two sides of the artist's work. Approximately three-quarters of the exhibit is comprised of photos of deserted places under the blanket of night and the rest are voyeuristic shots of a man and a woman that yield all kinds of interesting questions.

Mazaud, now a Tacoma resident, found his muse shortly after leaving the bustling environs of big cities like New York and Paris for the much more quiet and open spaces of Ann Arbor, Mich. He was struck by the brightly lit yet deserted parking lots he found in this Midwestern town and photographed them with a large-format 8x10 camera. Using extended nighttime exposures, up to 30 minutes in some cases, he captures the essence of the strange, sometimes creepy vibe such places give off when the lights are all on but nobody's home. He calls it a "lunar, mock-cosmic quality."

Such is the case in his piece titled "Opening," a photograph of what looks to be an alleyway lined with backsides of buildings, where deliveries are made. Mazaud set up the shot so that half the field of vision within the frame is taken up by a close-up of a bare wall and an evergreen tree with little plants at its base, while the other half captures the stark alleyway with light snow blowing along the ground. Another contrast is seen through two very obvious no-parking signs,

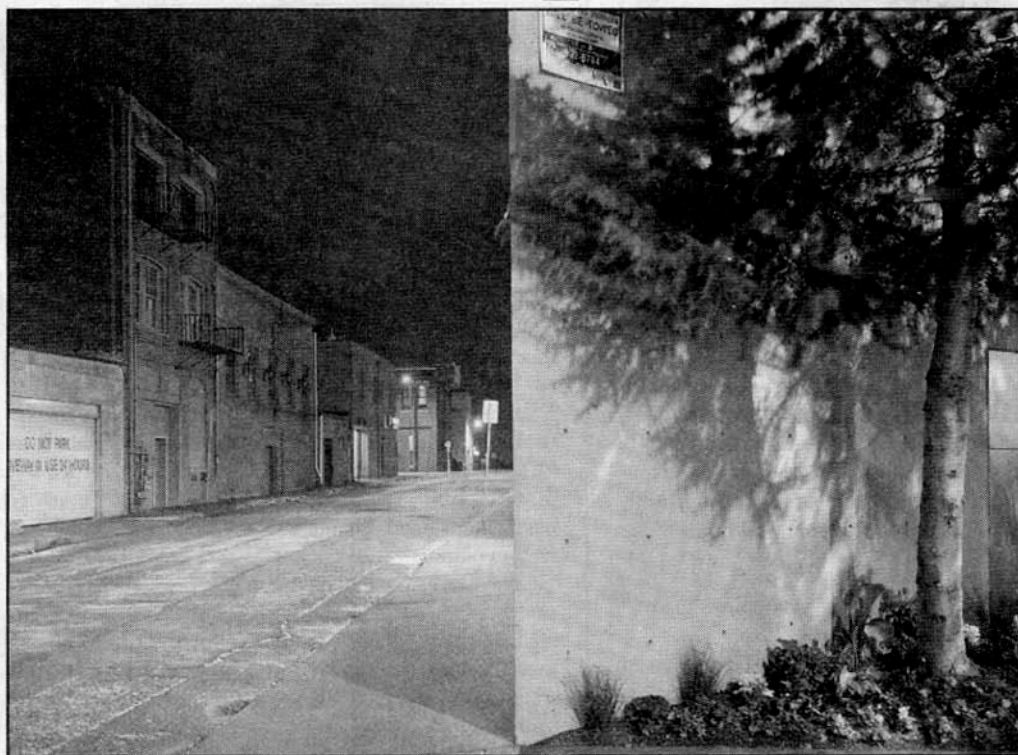


PHOTO COURTESY OF REBECCA V GALLERY

IN THE DARK. Photographer Philippe Mazaud is intrigued by the factual and imaginary contrasts inherent in deserted places under cover of night.

one threatening to tow unauthorized vehicles. Trouble is, the place is completely deserted and doesn't appear to be a place of any exceptional traffic volumes that would require such signage. In fact, this piece looks like a photo of a vacant studio lot in Hollywood.

In "Taxi," the cars are going nowhere. Here, Mazaud shows a "mountain" of junked cars in an automobile graveyard in the foreground with a range of hills or mountains off on the distant horizon.

"Painted Mountain (Study)" shows two murals of mountain scenery painted on portions of low, concrete walls that border an industrial looking compound complete with three silos and construction or farming equipment.

Taking a look at the rest of

the exhibit, very different from his other works, more contrasting imagery can be seen. The viewer may develop questions in his or her mind about who the man and woman are in these photographs. Are they secret lovers stealing away to places where no one is likely to find them? That is one possible scenario. In "Tunnel Room 6" they are either dressing or undressing in an abandoned tunnel. Have they known each other long, or are they new acquaintances living out their lust for one another? Could be.

In "Sleepwalk" the man lies naked outdoors on a small towel; next to him only the bottom half of a fully dressed woman is seen standing next to him holding her purse as if she is just arriving or just leaving. There are many possibilities for

imaginative viewers to concoct in their minds.

In reality, the couple is Mazaud and his wife, Wendy. The effect of the artist's photographs, however, entices a mental picture of a more risqué arrangement between the two subjects. His placement of himself and his wife in the shot accentuates their surroundings by showing a lot of it, whether on a beach or lazing on a grassy hill.

"Exposures"

Where: Rebecca V
Gallery, 3010 6th Ave.

When: Through Nov. 17

Info: Visit www.rebec-cavgallery.com or call
(253) 572-9111