

81Bees, *Minimalism*, Mullen Brothers Imaging, 3/25/16

The 81Bees is a collective of photographers loosely associated with the CCSF Photography Department. The Minimalism exhibit is at the Mullen Brothers Imaging plant. The company has a rather large open area for the gallery with a clean industrial look, high ceiling and gallery lighting. The exhibit consists of 44 images by 16 photographers. The images are predominately digital B&W with a few C-Print color images. All are framed in traditional manner, most with simple black frames and white mats, ranging in size from 5x7 to 13x20 (estimates).

Minimalism is an art movement that evolved in the 1960's by six or eight prominent artists who usually disavowed being Minimalists. The term and the categorical definition were actually established by critics. For painting, the surface of the painting was just that, "a surface", nothing more, not a metaphor for space or a body in space. For sculptures it was about stripping away inessential details and removing any kind of illusionistic reference and narrative, often using repeated identical simple shapes such as a cube. Emotions, metaphors, illusions, representations, narratives, history, and culture were not part of these ideas. Despite a backlash from Modernists critics, these ideas influenced many visual, music, and dance artists. Since the half century or more since then the term Minimalism was coined it has entered our vernacular for describing arts of simple forms and repeated phrases; more of a minimalism with a lower case first letter rather than a capital letter.

The 81 Bees exhibit is certainly more "minimalism" than "Minimalism"; after all, the process of photography is illusionistic in nature. One of the amazing abilities of our brains is to see splotches on a paper or computer screen and create an image or illusion of "something." Even abstract photography carries a hint of real life object and narrative.

There is an impetus to simplify photographs; without simplifications most photos are just confusing. We often equate photography with what we see with our own eyes. However, our vision is made up of not only dynamic sensory input, but also mental processing and memory matching. Looking at photos we have taken, we often find that landscapes are smaller and farther away than we remember, or the central subject we photographed seems lost in a confusing background, or some disturbing shadow or object we didn't see is more prominent than our subject, and so on. Since the first days of photography, moving closer, isolating the subject, positioning to eliminate clutter have been basic tools of photographers.





Photographers: Anton Bulyonov, Aneta Cherykova, Mary Celojko, Samantha Cooper, Clare Coppel, Kristina Davis, Donna L. Dodd, Beatriz Escobar, Marsha Guggenheim, Avril McHugh, Maja Pilipovic, Bob Nishihira (Nish), Yon Sim, Gordon Szeto, Terri Watters, Yelena Zhavoronkova