

Kari Orvik (*Geneva*) and Kathya Landeros (*Hombrecitos & Mujercitas*)
Artists-In-Residence, Rayko Photo Center, Dec 11, 2015.

“Compare and Contrast” is a fundamental method of sorting out the world, be it in front of us or in our heads. It doesn’t happen often when looking at photographer’s work. It is an “Apples & Oranges” thing. Even that classic photo class assignment of all the students photographing the same scene doesn’t often bear much comparison fruit. It is usually more about the individual’s work.

The Orvik and Landeros exhibit is an exciting exception. Both photographers are showing work about a defined group of people. Both use large format cameras and exhibit black & white digital prints of about the same size. Orvik’s prints are digital copies of wet plate photos. The exhibit is in a long hallway gallery with Landeros work first and Orvik second. Each artist has provided a statement that defines and discusses their subject and their intention for the photographs. Orvik is recording the people and neighborhood of her wet-plate photographic studio in San Francisco “to create a document of change, presence and relationships”. Landeros has been photographing Latino youths in Sacramento “that belies the stereotyping of Latinos”.

Orvik’s group is defined by a physical location, an environment and culture of “place.” The success of her work depends on placing her subjects in that place and illuminating its appearance. Landeros’ group is defined by age and a culture of ethnicity. Her objective is to extract her subjects from their ethnic culture and present them without any specific reference; belying stereotypes.

Except for the large street scene of Orvik’s neighborhood I did not find evidence of a cohesive milieu or a network that united the people and the place. However, her copies of wet plates entice one to look closer and examine thoroughly. The wet-plate portraits and formal shots of store displays are beautiful.

On the whole, I think Landeros is the more successful. These youths are presented in neutral backgrounds with few cultural clues. We are forced to see them as American youths in that age of excitement-pain of becoming adults.



Kari Orvik



Kathya Landeros