Stories found in photos

Some images tell us clearly what is going on, while others leave the interpretation up to the viewer.

Nikki Renee Anderson’s “Icelandic Garden No. 1” is an image of a sculpture she created and placed in a meadow in Iceland.

Viktoria Sorochinski’s “Learning a Lesson” flips the typical mother-daughter roles.

Lori Waxman, making sure she does not float away or crumble down to the ground.

A few solo portraits of Eve stage playful scenes around a pensive girl, as if to prove that she really is as knowing as she seems. The one exception, the exception to everything, is the most recent picture. Nude, just barely veiled by a sheer yellow curtain, Eve appears as fragile and wisful as her mother. Is she pretending to be her, or finally able to relax into vulnerability because of her absence?

What is staged? What is real? Can a picture be both? Sorochinski isn’t shoot- ing documentary images of Anna and Eve, nor is she making them into something other than what they are. Through an intimate, responsive process, the photographs isolate, illuminate, symbolize and embellish two very real people and their very real relationship.

We can’t know Anna and Eve, but we can tell stories about them because of the way that they give themselves over to the camera.

Paradoxically, the very medium that is meant to tell stories about real people—home movies—can also be the least revealing. At ThreeWalls, Laura Mackin has assembled an exhaustive body of work based on 60 years of found footage shot by a man named Dean. After sorting his 104 hours of film and video by type, she combined these into sped-up videos and gridded stills. Dean recorded 24 sunsets. He drove endlessly and got nowhere. He zoomed in on everything from a cruise ship to an ice crevice to a bunny, but never quite arrived.

Mackin flashes Dean’s life before our eyes, and it is nothing but a life rendered into empy, dizzying visual data. It’s a horror of a life, this life as she tells it. And it’s exactly what life should never be. That’s our job as we picture it, live it and re-imagine it. To never let it come down to 24 sunsets, 2 minutes of driving, and 2½ minutes of looking through a zoom lens.

“Nikki Renee Anderson: Secret Bodies,” through Feb. 11 at Dauble Carrero, 118 N. Peoria St., 312-464-1150 or dubbecer renogallery.com; “Viktoria Sorochinski: Anna & Eve,” through Feb. 25 at Catherine Edelman, 300 W. Superior St., 312-266-2350 or edelmanagallery.com; “Laura Mackin: 120 Years,” through Feb. 25 at ThreeWalls, 119 N. Peoria St., 312- 432-2972 or three-walls.org

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