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Girls' Club photo exhibit a rhapsody in femininity

Don't bother figuring out if Julie Blackmon's photograph "Patio," depicting a mother reading a magazine amid the organized chaos of her suburban backyard, was snapped in 1960 or 2010. (It's 2010, but that's missing the point.) Nothing quite pigeonholes the era—not the "New York" mag she's reading, not the two kids on tricycles, not the unattended barbecue grill, patio furniture or leaky garden hose. It also doesn't outline the shifting roles of women between the waves of feminism that dominated the 1970s or modern women in the workforce.

What the photograph does do is highlight the mother's social conditions, timeless as they appear, with a sense of self-empowerment, vulnerability and with perhaps an empathetic lens. Girls' Club Fort Lauderdale is the venue featuring Blackmon's photograph, in addition to dozens of other digital and processed images just like it, as part of the downtown private gallery's "Re-framing the Feminine: Contemporary Photography By Women" exhibit. The series, remaining on display through September, occupies two floors of the five-

year-old art space, which is co-owned by photographer Francie Bishop Good and husband David Horvitz.

"Re-framing" contains an anthology of photographs snapped by women between the 1950s and present day, each assembled over several years from Good's and Horvitz's private collection. Spanning the gelatin silver print of Cindy Sherman's famous "Untitled Film Stills" series to Blackmon's digital image, the 47 images set about capturing the whirlwind social conditions of women's lives amid the outbreak of the second and third waves of feminism, snapping eras of time as much in flux as the evolving medium of photography itself.

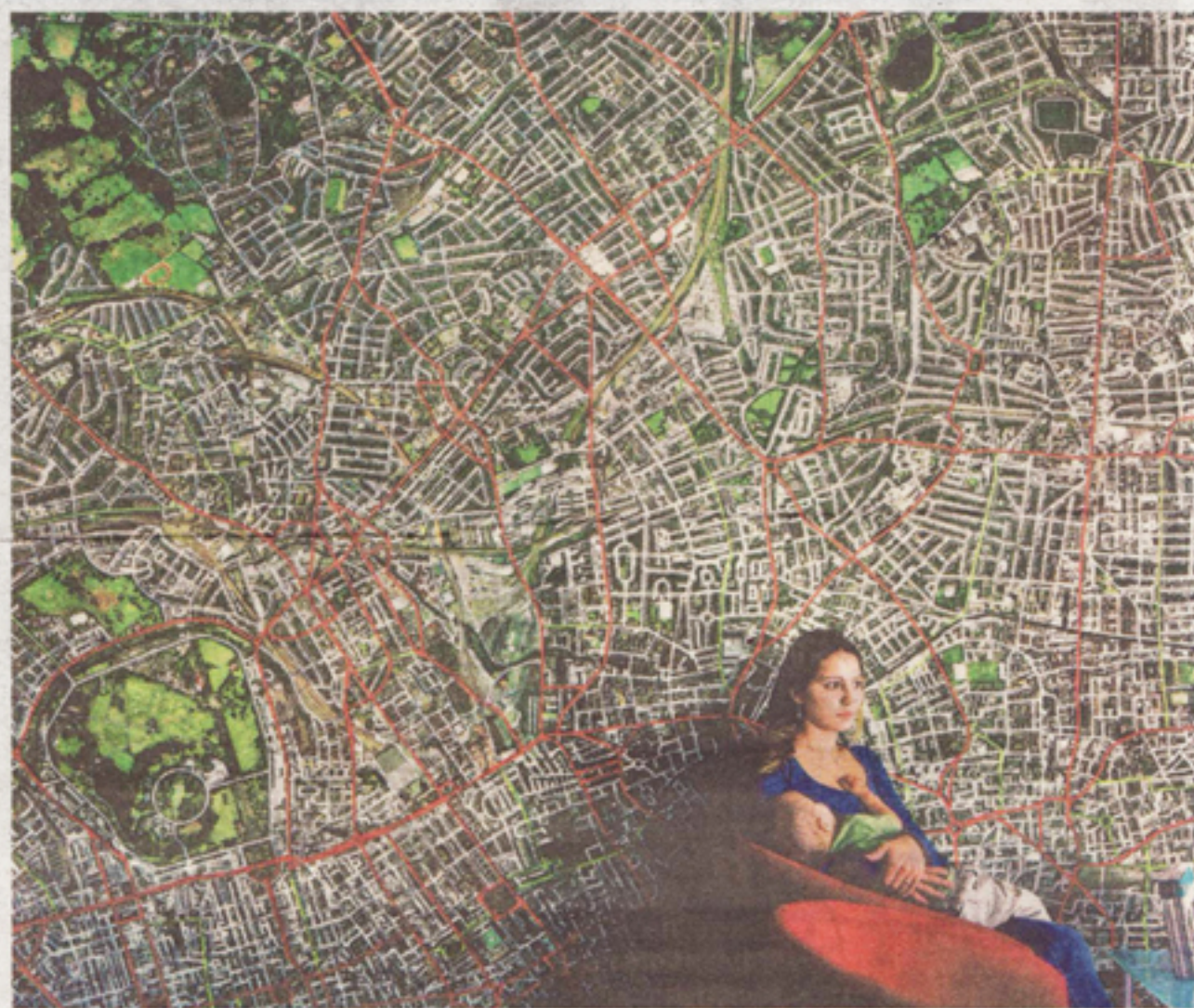
Miami photographer Dina Mitrani, of whom Good and Horvitz asked to guest-curate the "Reframing" series this year, said she sifted through dozens of women artist shots from the private collection, paying strict attention to the presence of femininity in the image, including color, depictions of women in the photograph and use of objects in the frame.

"A lot of themes came up in conversation when it came to curating the exhibit, themes of nurturing,

family, women rituals," said Mitrani, who runs her own self-titled gallery in Miami's Wynwood Arts District. "You look at the images, and it looks they were taken by female photographers. These are photos that women are making today outside the housewife's home and outside the realm of maternity. There is an intimacy with those images, and there is a sense of comfort - but not necessarily a feeling. There is an intimate moment of realism when a woman photographs another woman, and there isn't the defensive gaze anymore."

Ruth Orkin's 1951 black-and-white "American Girl in Italy," of a young artist confidently strolling down a European sidewalk as clusters of men gawk in her direction, confronts the male gaze head-on by capturing the bold assertiveness of women roaming about post-World War II society. "Re-framing" then leaps to the '70s with Cindy Sherman's "Untitled Film Still #19," a print tackling classic stereotypes of women in cinema, and once again to the last two decades as lenswomen tamper with digital post-processing.

Like "Patio," Tanyth Berkeley's 2009 "Eleanor Spring Day" portrays a woman in Victorian dress to capture the timelessness of feminine beauty, while Courtney Johnson does likewise with her 2008 "Dress." In the latter, Johnson treated the digital pigment print of a prom-garbed teenager against wood-paneled walls to an emulsion on Polaroid film to evoke nostalgia. Broward photog Peggy Nolan leaves trace suggestions of femininity with



GIRL SHOTS Hannah Starkey's "Untitled" print, which depicts a mother grappling with a difficult life decision, is on display alongside 47 other images by female photographers as part of "Re-Framing the Feminine" exhibit at Girls' Club Gallery in Fort Lauderdale. Bottom, Julie Blackmon's "Patio" photograph captures the timelessness of a suburban backyard. SUBMITTED PHOTOS



her haunting, under-the-bed image of a pink teddy bear in "Untitled (Lil Terry)."

"Peggy raised seven children, so this feeling is of the home that once had children pitter-pattering all over the place," Mitrani said. "This bitter, nostalgic image is a mother documenting what's left in her home after the children are grown up and gone. It's seeing beauty in the most ordinary moment."

"Re-framing" is being paired with an ongoing film series, dubbed "Chick Flicks," to highlight evolving treatments of femininity on camera, said Sarah Michelle Rupert, the Girls' Club gallery director. The series debuted last

month with Sherman's one-time cult directorial effort, 1997's "Office Killer," about a mousy copy editor who wends through film genres while murdering her co-workers. That was paired with photographer Jillian Mayer's performance art short "Scenic Jogging," in which she unsuccessfully chases a series of projected computer screen-savers down the nighttime streets of Wynwood.

"As we started thinking about which films to include, we discovered that a lot of the artists had video projects," said Sarah Michelle Rupert, the Girls' Club gallery director. "I think that the transition from photography to vid-

eo, in the respect of having multiple frames per second, is an easy one. The whole 'Chick Flicks' series deals with many adult life situations and the social conditions of modern women."

"Re-framing the Feminine: Photography from the collection of Francie Bishop Good + David Horvitz" runs through September at Girls' Club, 117 NW Second St. in Fort Lauderdale. The gallery is screening the documentary "The Woodmans" at 7 p.m. Feb. 25 as part of the "Chick Flicks" film series, which is pairing the exhibit. Call 954-828-9151, or visit GirlsClubCollection.org.