

"The Soul of Coney Island"

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The work of Dennis W. Felty, now located in the Morrison gallery, is an exceptional collaboration of photographs that capture the spirit of Coney Island. The pieces have one unifying theme: they are magical, sexual, horrifying, comical, intriguing, and wickedly playful all at the same time. It is just the right combination to suck you in and provoke your dark side in an innocent, delightful way.

The photographs display these elements through outrageously colored images of gypsies, mermaids, green men, sexually intriguing couples, fiery demons and ferris wheels. The vivid complimentary colors in most of the compositions, such as green and red, are used to help accent the dynamic life of the island.

Artists often offer a flavorless statement or explanation of their artwork, perhaps to let the viewer think about and formulate their own interpretation. Dennis W. Felty does not. His statement exemplifies his artwork.

"Behind the innocent facade of fun, rides, shows and cotton candy are the powerful themes of fear, lust, abandon, adventure, irony, comedy, salvation, gluttony, mystery, pain, monsters, gambling, and voyeurism," said Felty.

These themes jump out to the viewer through facial and artistic expression, and the use of color and composition. There are a few compositions worth mentioning.

"The Man with the Silver Girlfriend," depicts relationships between man and woman in a strange, but real way. The girl is silver and is standing back, while the male is dominant and full of life, portraying the girl as a trophy. Her expression seems to say, "I am really happy...really I am. See I'm smiling."

The composition of "Wonder Wheel #1," is of the architecture of the structure, which is the only element clearly focused. This allows the viewer to get a sense of action of the ferris wheel, which captures the overall atmosphere of Coney Island.

The piece that captures the most electrifying and devilish personality of Coney Island is "Rainbow." This piece is not as nice and pretty as its name implies. It is corrupt, fiery, and nightmarish, yet irresistible. Images of demons shoot up through the fire and there are blurred images of people in the chaos, as if the atmosphere and the experience has become part of them.

Overall, this show is a must see. It exhibits what carnivals and shows really mean, and why they are so appealing. "We might ask ourselves what are we losing and what are we gaining? There is powerful work being done at the carnival; this exhibit is an exploration of that work and forms an allegory offering insight into our very nature and ultimate potential," said Felty.

Felty did not just want to capture the atmosphere and portray innermost elements of the human spirit, but he also wanted to explore the battle between good and evil that lies within all of us. Which one wins ultimately effects what we become.

Right: "Wonder Wheel #1"

Above right: "The Man with the Silver Girlfriend"

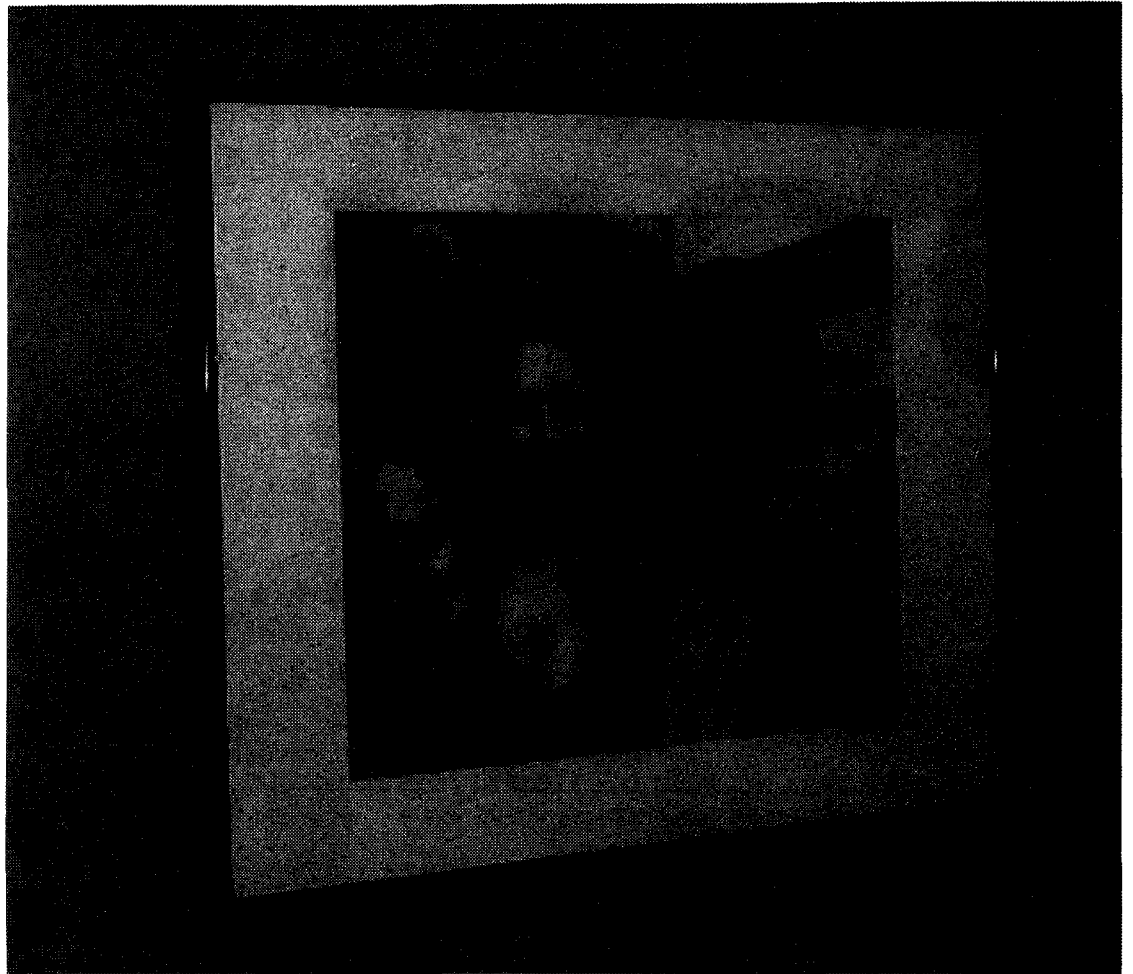


Photo by Jennifer Kauffman

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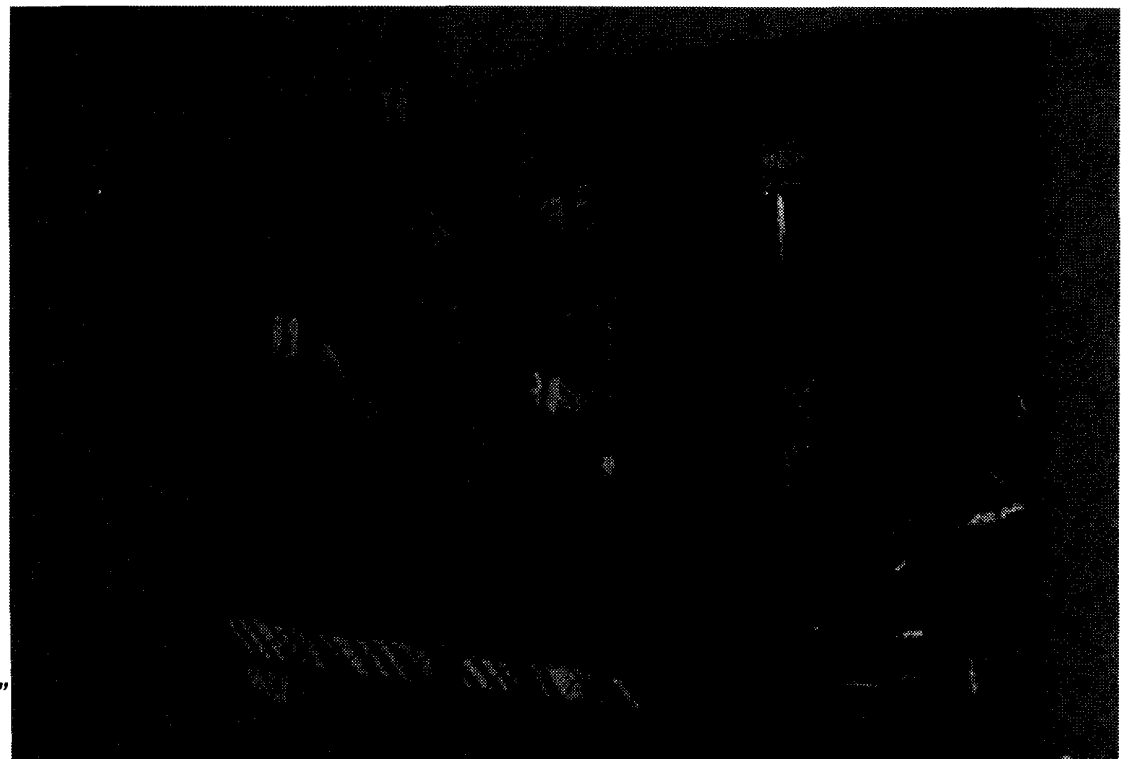


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