

Picture This

FotoFocus announces its ambitious plans for 2012

▶ BY STEVE ROSEN

FotoFocus, the citywide celebration of photographic and lens-based art planned for October 2012, is now well enough along that its organizers have shared detailed plans. In their first major press release, they also have announced their intention of making this ambitious photography event biennial.

Under the event's umbrella, shows by such well-known names as Doug and Mike Starn, Andy Warhol, Herb Ritts and Edward Steichen will be sponsored by area museums. Meanwhile, spaces like Weston Art Gallery, University of Cincinnati, Art Academy of Cincinnati, Manifest, Carnegie Arts Center, Prairie, Carl Solway Gallery, Country Club and numerous others — even Ohio University in Athens — will be involved.

To raise its profile in the community, FotoFocus plans to introduce itself this upcoming October (from 7-10 p.m. on Oct. 14) as part of Fountain Square Rocktober series, with artist-designed photo booths and video works and still images from the pending exhibitions. And at 7 p.m., Thomas Schiff will take a panoramic photo of the event that will then be available for download from www.fotofocuscincinnati.com.

Schiff, an arts patron and photographer, is a primary force behind FotoFocus. In a telephone interview, he said he began to push for FotoFocus when James Crump arrived at Cincinnati Art Museum in 2008 to become its photography curator. (Crump now is also its chief curator.) Crump is co-chairing FotoFocus with Raphaela Platow, Contemporary Arts Center's director and chief curator.

"I've always thought it would be a good idea to have a bigger presence of fine-art photography in the Cincinnati area," Schiff says. "Since James Crump came on at Cincinnati Art Museum, I thought he's capable of masterminding a program like that. He's efficient at doing a lot of things in a relatively short time. When we first talked about, we thought maybe we'd get seven or eight venues around town to have photography programming, but it turns out we're up to 23 or 24 now. It's caught on a lot quicker than we thought."

Schiff said he provided a modest amount of seed money to start up FotoFocus' marketing and organizational expenses, but the plan is for individual institutions to also use their own marketing power for their shows.

At a meeting last week of FotoFocus planners — director Mary Ellen Goeke, project manager Matt Distel (also Country Club's gallery director) and public relations director Judith Turner-Yamamoto — these were some of the mentioned expected highlights:

- The internationally known Doug and Michael Starn will present a photo-related instal-



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From *Gravity of Light* concept view of installation detail. Holy Cross Church, Mt. Adams. Copyright Doug and Mike Starn. All rights reserved.

lation, *Gravity of Light*, in Mount Adams' old Holy Cross Church, under Cincinnati Art Museum's sponsorship. It features large photographs installed around a carbon arc lamp, and is described in FotoFocus' press release as an "immersive, experiential installation." It has been shown elsewhere in the U.S., and premiered in Stockholm in 2005. CAM will also feature *L.A. Style* by the late fashion photographer Herb Ritts. At the same time, Contemporary Arts Center will open its 2012-2013 exhibition season with a show of Andy Warhol's Polaroid portraits, while Taft Museum of Art will feature *Star Power: Edward Steichen's Glamour Photography*.

- FotoFocus hopes to tie in with a conference by the Society of Photographic Educators at the Art Academy during October's second week. At that time, the Art Academy will have Laurel Nakadate — subject of a one-person show at MoMA's PS1 exhibition center in New York — as the Lightborne Visiting Artist. Meanwhile, Emily Hanako Momohara — the Academy professor who will host that conference — will show her own work at Annie Bolling Gallery in East Walnut Hills.

- Downtown's Weston Art Gallery is working with Cincinnati artist Anthony Luensman on a conceptual installation that uses photography in a still to be determined way. And Covington's Baker Hunt Art & Cultural Center will work with Cincinnati photographer Michael Wilson — renown nationally for his record-album artwork — to develop a show for the institution.

"I've been around Cincinnati for awhile and this is unprecedented," Distel says of FotoFocus. "I've looked back in our history and found nothing that equals this level of inter-institutional cooperation." ©