

In Seattle Galleries: Roda's pictures move the heart and soul

By REGINA HACKETT / SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER ART CRITIC,

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If Tim Roda were a horse, he'd be the favorite. His roughly scissored, black-and-white photos featuring himself, his wife and small son made him an instant notable after graduating from the University of Washington with a master's of fine arts degree in 2004.

Ceramics was his academic focus, and sometimes ceramics pop up in his prints: elephant trunks, kiln rubble, figurine curios. His photos are stage sets that imply a play. I resisted their appeal. The roughing-up-your-photos strategy seemed like a ploy, not crucial to the product, as with the Starn Twins. And as for staged photos that explore personal identities, let's say the field is crowded.

Resolving to cast a cold eye on his second solo show at the Greg Kucera Gallery, I changed my mind midway through the viewing experience, finally realizing that Roda's burlesques are true to themselves, powerfully staged and inhabited.

The print of himself dancing with his wife in a construction site with their child blurry amid the house beams, and the image of the three of them slumped together asleep in their traveling clothes, say volumes about intimate relationships without saying a word. His work's about love, and family love in daily life's tough grind is rare content in contemporary art.