

'Take a Picture/Tell a Story' Art Exhibit Opens at SMC Museum of Art

By Ryan McKinley



"Deodorant"

Photo Robert Gumpert, courtesy Saint Mary's College Museum of Art

The phrase "every picture tells a story" is given new meaning by San Francisco-based photographer Robert Gumpert in his first exhibitions in the United States, "Take a Picture/Tell a Story" and "I need some deodorant. My skin's getting restless," which will be on display through March 15 at the Saint Mary's College Museum of Art.

What sets Gumpert's photography apart, aside from the intimacy of the images, is the story. For every

photograph, Gumpert conducts extensive interviews. The exhibits are a combination of the visual and the oral. If the audience only examines one aspect, they are missing the experience. "The shows are unlike anything we have ever shown here," said Kyla Tynes, the exhibition's manager. "We want people to have a reaction and take the time to read the work. These are very deep societal stories."

Gumpert became interested in photography as a child in the 1950s.

He learned to develop film while still in grade school so his mother would buy him a camera.

He started his professional career covering the United Mine Workers of America strike in Harlan County, Ky., in 1974. He has continued to document social justice, labor movements and working conditions for the past four decades. "I have always related to topics touching on issues of class, race and power," Gumpert said.

The Saint Mary's exhibits feature

Gumpert's black and white photographs unframed on the museum's grey walls. "We thought the images were very raw and emotional, and we didn't want anything to detract from that," Tynes said.

For "I need some deodorant. My skin's getting restless," the photos are candid and almost voyeuristic. Sometimes looking around corners or through doorways, they show the staff of John George Psychiatric Emergency Services in Alameda County. Interviews are presented as block quotes on the walls and credited anonymously ("Health Specialist 1").

"For the psych ward project I wanted to speak about what the work and place are really like versus what is depicted in popular culture," Gumpert said.

"Take a Picture/Tell a Story" focuses on documenting prison inmates. These photos are close-ups of individuals looking directly into the camera. A computer in one corner of the gallery plays the audio interviews, the voices echoing off the walls. When combining image and audio together, it is as if the viewer is sitting with the individuals. The intimacy of the images is very striking. Audiences can look into the prisoner's eyes and see the lines on their faces.

"Take a Picture is intended to confront people," Gumpert said. "To say those we lock up are just like us:

they have kids, hopes, issues, bills and frustrations. With just a zig rather than zag you too could be where they are."

Gumpert hopes his work will show that "there is a need to appreciate and a need to correct. We, the USA, use the tools of incarceration to disappear our problems and 'the others' associated with them. For me the way a society treats those with the least of anything is a true barometer of the health of that society. The USA is getting sicker. But I see myself as an optimist and believe change is possible."

Tynes sees the exhibit as "an opportunity for Saint Mary's and this community to bring awareness to issues of human rights, prisons, prisoner rights, and start a dialogue that had otherwise not been thought about."

For more of Gumpert's work, visit <http://takeapicturetellastory.com>. Also on display are Christo and Jeanne-Claude's environmental textile art and William Keith's paintings of Native Americans. These other exhibits operate as counterpoint, with their vast landscapes, to Gumpert's intimate photography.

For more information about the SMC Museum of Art, visit <http://www.stmarys-ca.edu/saintmarys-college-museum-of-art> or call the gallery at (925) 631-4379 during business hours.

Concert Features Three Concerto Competition Winners, Two from Lafayette

Submitted by Keith Gleason



From left: Ellie Kanayama, Katherine Chen, and Oliver Taylor

Photo Vladimir Gurevich

Young People's Symphony Orchestra's (YPSO) Winter Concert will feature three Concerto Competition winners – two from Lafayette, one from Albany – in a program of Gershwin's *An American in Paris*, Falla's *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* with Katherine Chen on piano, Wieniawski's Violin Concerto No. 2 in D minor with Ellie Kanayama on violin, Arutiunian's Trumpet Concerto with Oliver Tay-

lor on trumpet, and Ravel's *Rhapsodie Espagnole*.

Each season, YPSO offers all members who have been in the orchestra for at least one full season the opportunity to enter the Concerto Competition to compete for the opportunity to play one movement of a concerto with the orchestra at a regular concert. This year's judges were music director/conductor David Ramadanoff, violist and conductor

Rem Djemilev, who is music director of Young People's Chamber Orchestra, and Monica Scott, who is a cellist and cello teacher. This season's concerto competition had 15 competitors. Seven winners were selected in total.

Pianist Katherine Chen, of Lafayette, will play the first movement of the Falla, *En el Generalife*, which is about the jasmine gardens around the Alhambra. "I love the first

movement because there are parts of it that imitate rippling water or gurgling fountains. I also like that the piece is more of a balanced collaboration between piano and the orchestra," says Chen, who is a sophomore at The College Preparatory School in Oakland. Katherine began her piano studies at age 3 in China. At age 11, she began studying under two private studios and was actively participating in CCMA competitions and festivals. She is currently studying with Armando Pino. In fifth grade, she took up violin as well, fulfilling a childhood dream, and she became the concertmaster of her middle school orchestra in seventh grade. She now plays in YPSO's first violin section, and this is her third year with the orchestra.

Acalanes High School senior Oliver Taylor will play the complete Arutiunian Trumpet Concerto. "I love how the energy changes throughout this concerto. The excitement of the fast parts is contrasted by the slower mini-movements, which are very lyrical and beautiful. The juxtaposition between the fast and slow movements keeps it exciting and fun to play but also difficult. Navigating a piece like this is hard not only for the soloist but the orchestra as well," says Taylor. He currently studies trumpet with Jay Rizzeto and has played with the likes

of Wayne Wallace, Wynton Marsalis, Erik Jekabson and Mic Gillette. During his four years in YPSO, Taylor has visited Prague, Bratislava, and Vienna on the 2012 Central Europe Tour and played at Carnegie Hall, Central Park and Harvard University during the 2014 East Coast Tour. In addition to YPSO, he plays in the Acalanes High School Wind and Jazz Ensembles and in a private jazz combo. Taylor has won many awards over the years for jazz and classical music, including YPSO's 2013 Concerto Competition where he played the Hummel Trumpet Concerto. To watch Taylor's performance of the Hummel go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=13FA-gZiHZs>.

Ellie Kanayama, a 15-year-old freshman at Albany High School, will play the first movement of the Wieniawski Violin Concerto No. 2.

The final work on the program, which includes 103 young musicians ages 12 to 18, will be Maurice Ravel's *Rhapsodie Espagnole*. The Winter Concert will be held at 8 p.m. Jan. 31 at Walnut Creek Presbyterian Church, and at 3 p.m. Feb. 1 at Dean Leshner Center for the Arts. For more information about YPSO, visit www.ypsomusic.net, email ypsomusic@yahoo.com or call (510) 849-9776. For tickets and information, call (510) 849-YPSO (9776), email at ypsomusic@yahoo.com or go to www.ypsomusic.net.

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