

Hints Of Disaster — GayCity^{NEWS}

Anthony Goicolea's gothic, cinematic narratives

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BY WAYNE NORTHCROSS

Those even a little familiar with the work of Anthony Goicolea will surely remember his series of photomontages in which he appears as pre-pubescent boys (and as a girl here and there) enticed by sexual discovery, mired in sexual confusion, and engaged in all sorts of middle school-age sinister mischief.

As a consummate image-maker of complex photographic narratives, Goicolea's influence is felt far and wide. The fashion designer John Bartlett paid homage to Goicolea's prep school fantasias by staging his fashion presentation at the Harvard Club as sprawling tableau vivant inspired by the artist's photographs. What is an artist to do next? Should he churn out recognizable imagery for the market or go off the beaten track and bring back something new?

At the opening for Goicolea's new body of work entitled "Almost Safe," I was struck by a little acknowledged truth that over a period of years, if an artist is left to explore his work, he might actually surprise you. Maybe struck isn't the right word; held down and slapped into semi-consciousness by the brilliance of this multi media series is a more apt description. There is no better thrill in this business than to follow an artist's work over several years and realize that it gets better and better, that you can see the artist wrestle with and solve questions of narrative structure, character development, and art history. Such intrepid creativity not only brings back pleasure into the act of looking, it also saves a critic the trouble of pointing out these questions first.

"Almost Safe" comprises a series of large-scale photographs, drawings, a 16mm film, and one large painting. Had he included a sculptural installation, Goicolea could have summed up the breadth of contemporary art practice in one show.

ANTHONY GOICOLEA

"Almost Safe"
Postmasters
459 W. 19th St.
Through Jun. 2
11 a.m. - 6 p.m.
212-727-3323

Goicolea excels in the photographic realm. In these highly cinematic photographs, he features elements of bleak land and urbanscapes that are part industrial wasteland, part crumbling utopia, and part Romantic vista in the vein of Caspar David Friedrich, which he later edits to make one whole work.

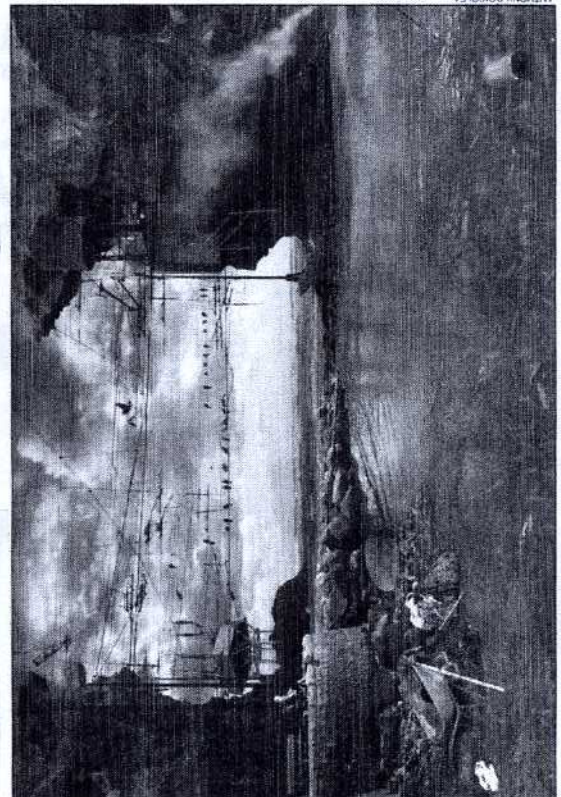
"Low Tide" is a Frankenstein-esque image, an amalgam of gothic and cinematographic turns of phrase — a turbulent sea, and overcast sky, birds perched on telephone wires a la Hitchcock, a fetid inlet, and craggy promontories.

A recurring feature of Goicolea's narrative design is an obliquely placed element that alludes to a disaster, accident, or crime, for example an abandoned wheelbarrow or an overturned rowboat.

A noticeable omission from all these works is the artist himself. Instead in the back space of the gallery hang 10 pairs of photographs and drawings of elderly men and women, which resemble the matter-of-fact style of Victorian era portraiture. These sad sack characters reappear in the larger scapes, albeit as minor players in a larger environmental drama.

The 16mm film has a silent film era tinge — even the camera looks like a creaking antique — and its narrative suggests a nighttime search-and-rescue, as the only visible element is a group of pulsating flashlights, poking around in the dark.

With "Almost Safe," Goicolea reinvigorates the pleasure afforded to the eye in the act of looking and proves that image making not only needs a collector and a market but an enraptured audience.



Anthony Goicolea's "Low Tide" is an amalgam of gothic and cinematographic turns of phrase, a collage suggesting Frankenstein and Hitchcock