

by Tim Moloney | Photography by Jill Hunter

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for art's sake **double exposure**

Houston artist and cultural provocateur David A. Brown has two new photography shows developing: March 10 brings "Urban Cathedral" at DiverseWorks and March 11 opens "It's All Plastic" at the Deborah Colton Gallery.

In his DiverseWorks show, the inspiration came from driving into the city along 1-10 and going through the Beltway and Loop 610 interchanges. "You see these massive overpasses and concrete bands that really are tremendously beautiful," he explains. "People spend so much time on the road that I thought it would be interesting to re-contextualize the experience as pleasant, even inspirational."

In Urban Cathedral, Brown uses digital photographs of the urban landscape to create an otherworldly ephemeral environment of color, pattern and super-saturated light. **By reframing and recontextualizing the otherwise mundane trappings of urban existence** – the reflection of light off a car bumper, soaring edifices of steel and glass or water rippling in a sidewalk puddle – Brown transforms the urban environment into a place of wonder.

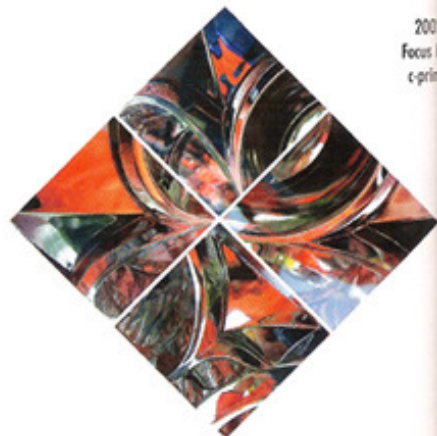
"So much of my work is really influenced by patterns – replicating images to create an amazing optical illusion," he says, while explaining a photo of a corner of the old 59 overpass on Montrose, which looks nothing like it in the transformation. "They ride the edge between too much and too little information."

His show at the Deborah Colton Gallery is another exploration into the hidden beauty of everyday life but this time, the subject matter is photographs of plastic headlights. Both enigmatic and challenging, the images force the viewer to figure out what's going on. "By compressing multiple planes of light, you get a surreal image that mirrors what can be at times a superficial reality."

Although Brown has been taking photos consistently since the age of 10 (when his grandparents gave him a Kodak Disc camera), "I wouldn't call myself a photographer," he says. "I'm an artist. Photography is a skill, a vehicle that I use a lot."

Brown moved from Florida to Houston in 1992 to attend the Hilton School of Hotel and Restaurant Management at the University of Houston. "I'd been a sous chef and a personal chef, but I thought I could learn more from some college courses. It didn't really work out that way."

Dissatisfied with the program, Brown eventually graduated magna cum laude with a BFA in sculpture. He got into conceptual work, he says, exploring the ongoing battle between man-made materials and nature, a theme that continues today in his art. **In 2000, he founded spacemaker.org as a public art project for artists to promote their portfolios on the Internet.** In 2002, he became the full-time executive director of the organization. And with a full-time job, a wife and a relatively new daughter, he still finds time to make art. "Right now I have a library of about 50,000 – 60,000 images so I'm figuring out how to play with them. I'm also going to start painting again."



"I'm really lucky. I married an artist and my wife (Christa Forster) is a goddess," he smiles. "We both agree that making art is a priority for both of us. **In fact, in our wedding vows, we had a line from Rilke that said, 'I vow to protect your solitude,' which I think is really important in a marriage,**" he stresses. "I'm such a lucky guy it's amazing."

DIVERSEWORKS

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houston, tx 77002
www.diverseworks.org
713.223.8346

DEBORAH COLTON GALLERY

2500 summer st, third floor
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PaperCITY

Photo Focus

BY CATHERINE D. ANSPON

This month, thousands of curators, critics, collectors, dealers, disciples, artists and art-world heavyweights flock to Houston for one of the most important photographic gatherings in the world: more than 100 exhibitions, 45 days, approximately 3,000 images on display. The venues

are citywide, the scope global, the approach classical to cutting-edge. Following are our top touts for FotoFest 2006, The 11th International Biennial of Photography and Photo-Related Art. This FotoFest's prescient dual topics: **The Earth** and **Artists Responding to Violence**.

Participating Spaces

David A. Brown Houston lensman and Spacemaker.org Web site founder Brown steps above the radar with dual exhibitions: "Urban Cathedral" takes over the subspace at DiverseWorks with a grand environment, while Brown's kaleidoscopic, futuristic swirls at **Deborah Colton Gallery** are inspired by modern society's preferred material, plastic. *DiverseWorks, March 10 – April 15; Deborah Colton Gallery, March 11 – April 23.*

FOTOFEST-ORGANIZED EXHIBI



(1) AES+F's *Action Half Life, Episode 2 #12*, at FotoFest HQ. (2) Nathalie Latham's *Nina, Retired Mayak Plutonium Plant Worker*, at FotoFest HQ. (3) Doug and Mike Starn's *Black Pulse 15 (lambda)* at New World Museum. (4) Lalla Essaydi's *Converging Territories #2* at Anya Tish Gallery. (5) Chuck Ramirez's *Louis (Linda)* at Finesilver Gallery. (6) John Ganis' *Sun City, Oro Valley, AZ*, at Winter Street Studios. (7) **David A. Brown's Focus (detail)** at Deborah Colton Gallery. (8) Nancy O'Connor and Michele Grinstead's *Baby Room* (McCabe/Carruth Funeral Home, Victoria, Texas) at 5004 Feagan.