

mahan gallery

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press release

for immediate release

august 22, 2005

mahan gallery opens exhibition, free sitting, photography by nora herting, september 03 – 23, reception, saturday, september 03, 6-10pm.

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photographer works undercover taking baby pictures in the name of art !

one would expect a student earning a masters in fine art to make academically sanctioned 'fine art' in her studio, but nora herting was working undercover as a photographer at a commercial portrait place in the mall while earning her graduate degree at the ohio state university.

while employed at the undisclosed studio, herting arranged for volunteers to pose as customers. when they got in front of the camera, herting would direct them into her own version of family portraits. the resulting pictures are not the typical smiling families, or cute baby pictures, but portraits that deviate far from the norm that they are disjointed and comical in their incorrectness; a family turned backwards to the camera, a grown woman straddling her sister, a hairy chested man with a mullet holding a girl in pajamas.

the baby picture, family portrait and other studio photographs have gone unexamined as both art and social artifact. herting's exhibit "free sitting" takes a critical and humorous look at an aspect of photography we all have experienced.

by repeating her portraits in 6 foot grids, herting eludes to the precut sheets of different sized photographs given to studio customers. the repeated images contrast the commercial anonymity of the retail studios with the sentimentality of family portraits. viewers can identify the various formats and their predetermined uses; the numerous wallet size photos to be carried by aunts and the large portrait slated for display over the mantel.

in addition to the portraits, "free sitting" also features a sound installation, using the audio from hidden microphones herting made and wore as she directed customers from behind the camera at the studio. the audio reveals the hilarious cajoling; discomfort and contortion normal families undergo in order to cast themselves in the image of the perfect family unit.

the mahan gallery focuses on emerging and mid-career artists working in a variety of media, including painting, photography, and sculpture. gallery hours are tuesday - saturday 11am - 5pm or by appointment.