

HOME

Businesses

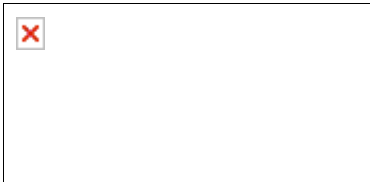
Circulation

eEdition

Calendar

Gallery

Blogs



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December 18, 2009

- Jobs
- Real Estate
- Cars
- Classifieds
- Obituaries

Slavick revisits Hiroshima after the bomb

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Holiday Giving

News

- Durham
- Orange
- Region
- Columnists
- State
- Nation/World

Business

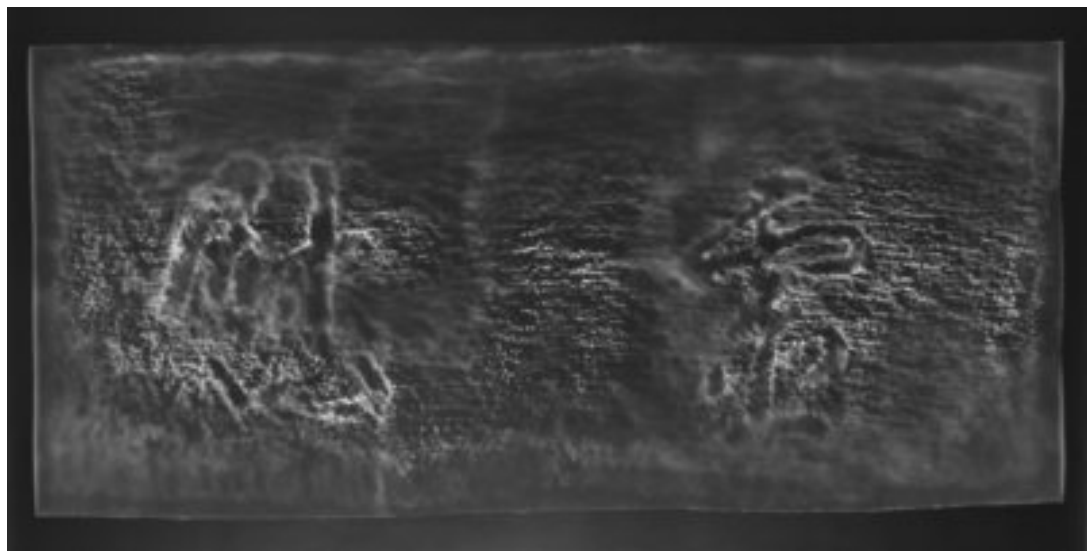
- Local/State
- Nation/World

Sports

- Top Stories
- Duke
- NCCU
- UNC
- NCSU
- College
- High School
- Canes
- Durham Bulls
- Pro Sports
- Golf
- Tennis
- Auto Racing
- Soccer
- Columnists

Lifestyles

- Announcements
- Books
- Schools
- Health
- Food
- Faith
- Entertainment
- TV
- Columnists



if you go

"elin o'Hara slavick. Hiroshima: After Aftermath," Golden Belt, 807 E. Main St., Building 3, Durham, through Jan. 10. For information, call 967-7700.

August 6, 1945, Enola Gay, Hiroshima, the atomic bomb are all abstractions in American minds even as our country fights a war in Iraq that began with the threat of weapons of mass destruction, and world leaders disagree on how to deal with an Iran who seems determined to make her own bomb.

elin o'Hara slavick, a distinguished tenured professor of art at UNC Chapel Hill with a degree in photography, revisits Hiroshima and reminds us that the bomb is not an abstraction, but is real and the horror rained on the Japanese people could happen again in a different part of the world. Her exhibit focuses on objects found at the epicenter, now encased in the Peace Museum on the site where the bomb hit.

Allowed total access to the museum's artifacts, Slavick has created cyanotypes of A-bombed objects taken briefly from the museum's vaults. She exposes them on x-ray film, but it is the radiation within them that causes the exposure. She also uses silver gelatin prints and inkjet prints in the continuation of her essay on the site as it looks today.

Opinion

HS Editorials
 HS Letters
 CHH Editorials
 CHH Letters
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Special Sections

Senior Times



The images she chose to work her photographic magic are simple, ordinary things: a detail of a wall, a gravestone, a belt buckle, a canteen, a hair comb, a leaf from a Chinese Parasol Tree. Among the current images of the world that exists today at the ground zero site, she has included the Ugina Police Station's exterior which withstood the bomb while the interior was burned to a crisp; a playground where children laugh and play; an old man washing his feet in the Motoyasu-gawa River which ran blood red and was filled with corpses; and a perfect dandelion about to explode its seeds to the air.

Slavick also made rubbings in the basement of the Fuel Hall and City Planning Office, which remained standing. Nomura Eizo, who survived the blast because he was in that basement, said that when he came upstairs all he could see was a burning hell. (Eizo lived into his eighties.) On Slavick's Web site, she tells of working in the basement of that building for two days making the rubbings, or frottages, of walls, broken columns, rusty doors and old keyholes. She then exposed them in the darkroom as paper negatives used to make contact prints. The results are ghostly traces of each object. It is a matter of record that at impact Hiroshima, a city of 400,000 people, had ceased to exist.

Slavick has an impressive resume of exhibitions, curatorial responsibilities, articles and books. Her work includes photography, drawing and painting, collage, and found objects; through her art she has explored feminism, body politics, the global economy, contemporary workers, the U.S. military and exported violence. She believes her art can transform society and constantly uses today's headlines to explore her basic beliefs through new themes.

The artist arrived on the Triangle art scene fighting for her right to show a lesbian work of art in an invitational solo exhibition at the Raleigh Artspace and has not stopped using her art as a political weapon since. She is a pacifist and a feminist; she teaches conceptual photography and challenges her students to look at the world in new ways. With her art, backed up by meticulous research, she points her finger at her country and its military agenda and then looks for a simple beauty in the peoples most affected.

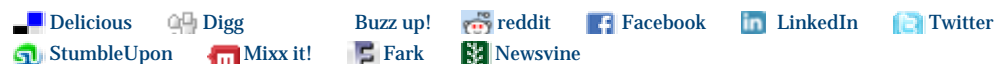
Her themes include the places the United States has bombed, the murders in Fayetteville of two innocent people by three United States white supremacist soldiers, working people taking a moment of rest and Hiroshima revisited, re-photographed and remembered.

Slavick's exhibition is in the central gallery of Building 3 at Golden Belt on East Main Street, where more than 30 artists maintain working studios. I was there on a Saturday afternoon and LabourLove Gallery was hosting a large craft show and most of the artists were working in their studios or just hanging out. What is surprising is how many artists who work daily and seriously on their art. Some are well known and show regularly; others hope for exhibits and gallery representation but until then, continue to create art.

This is a real destination for art recreation; the renovated buildings are beautiful and the joint is jumpin.'

Blue Greenberg's column appears each week in Entertainment and More. She can be reached at blueg@bellsouth.net or by writing her in c/o The Herald-Sun, P.O. Box 2092, Durham, NC 27702.

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