

Kathleen Tunnell Handel's "Where the Heart Is" has been on my radar since 2018. The work resonates with me because of my life experiences that still fuel rich memories.

My extended family lived in mobile homes that I visited and vacationed in. I also grew up in a town that had a trailer park with a river that ran through its backyard. As a child, this park captivated my attention and my weekends. Some of its residents were circus performers. The circus would practice in the park's front yard. In visiting, it was a wonderland of darting hummingbirds, sunflowers and daring adventurers that I've never forgotten. I do know the park's future was often threatened until the residents were able to buy the land that housed their homes. The park still stands on that same riverbank, as a private sanctuary, without most townspeople even knowing it exists.

What has also held my attention is the artist herself. She is not satisfied with just cursory inquiry. Tunnell Handel dedicates her time to exploring, observing and documenting a human condition. Like a scientist, she digs deep into the broader social issues, uses multiple approaches to depicting the topic, and enhances the photographs with personal interviews. She's sought out multi-state evidence, has considered the opinions and perspectives of experts on affordable housing, and straddles the views of photograph as document and as fine art. Her persistence and her dedication to advocacy for trailer park residents really is what impresses me the most.

While not looking at the locations of the photographs, I focused on the photographs themselves for editing purposes and sequence. In the end, eight states are represented in the exhibition the Griffin Museum of Photography will exhibit in its "Home Views". In culling photographs, I looked for elements in photographs that spoke of the people that lived within the residences. Transition images came first, in order to bring a narrative from onset to end within a very limited number, all the while considering content and rhythm. Kathleen's skill at finding mesmerizing color, serendipity and her gift for assembling refined compositions within the frame provided me with such ample choices.

Our goal in our current exhibition offerings is to provide our audience a thread of photographic work on how we dwell. We are hoping that Kathleen Tunnell Handel's photographs begin conversations inside our gallery spaces that eventually change practice and perspectives outside the gallery space in the public domain.

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