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Tricia Toms

Maine-based Portrait & Documentary Photographer

BIOGRAPHY

Tricia Toms (she/her) is a Portrait & Documentary Photographer currently living near Portland, Maine. Her 30-year career journey has included working at newspapers, apprenticing with commercial and fine-art photographers, and running her own studios. Her artistic practice gravitates toward empathic representations of her subjects and their lives. Connections between people and their environment, life transitions, and finding stories in daily life, all inspire her work.

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2022 — Bakery Photo Collective, Photo A Go-Go Fine Art Exhibition and Auction

2020 — PhotoNOLA VR photowalk and portfolio review

2017 — FlashPoint Boston juried portfolio review and exhibition

2017 — Maine College of Art, CREATE VI: The Annual Continuing Studies Student and Faculty Exhibition, Portland, Maine (awarded Best in Show for image entitled “Loading Bait” from her Working Waterfront series)

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2003 -2010 —Artist Community of Salmon Falls Mills Annual Open Studios, Rollinsford, NH

2009 — Beach Pea Bakery (curated), Kittery, Maine

2008 — The Black Bean Cafe (curated), Rollinsford, New Hampshire

1998 — The Kennedy Center Canteen (curated), Washington, D.C.

1997 — The Georgetown Coffee House (curated), Washington, D.C.



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ARTIST STATEMENT

Magic City is a multi-year visual exploration into the town of Millinocket and its history. Over one hundred years ago, the township in central Maine was nicknamed the "Magic City" because it grew so fast out of the wilderness. From a hunting and fishing wilderness destination, it grew into a prosperous and even vital community, providing paper that was exported all over the world; from the largest paper mill in the world. It is said that during the Great Depression, no one at the mill lost their job. Workers reduced their hours to keep everyone working. The community prospered throughout the 20th Century. Citizens organized sports teams and a community band. They also built a golf course, opera house, hotel, community swimming pool and hospital. This from a town of about 7000 people. In 1973, average manufacturing wages in Millinocket were equivalent to \$64,000 in today's dollars (the state average was \$38,000). It was said a young man could graduate from high school and start work at the mill the very next day. The Bilateral Free Trade Agreement in 1989, followed by NAFTA in 1994, eliminated approximately 766,000 job opportunities - primarily for non college-educated workers - in U.S. manufacturing. The owner of the Millinocket mill declared bankruptcy in 2003, and closed the mill forever in 2008. Today, Millinocket has a service-based economy for its four-season tourism industry. Since 2000, the town has suffered a 16% decline in population. Poverty there is 1.5 times the state average. For children under the age of 18, the poverty rate stands at 18%. I love traveling to the area, but was intrigued by the history of the town and the relics of a different era. Like a lot of small upstate towns in New England, you'll find remnants of past lives and industry - derelict mill buildings or elaborate, brick-built homes in disrepair. We know from history how the people of industrial era built the foundation for so much we take for granted today. But the only monuments to their industry are these ramshackle remains in towns that struggle to survive as nature slowly reclaims her own. I choose not to see the decay and loss only. There are also the remains of lives well lived in a harsh world. Growth and resilience. Endurance and community. Once again, the Millinocket area shares its other prized commodity with the world - the Maine wilderness. Emerging from the wilderness over 100 years ago, to her return to it today - the circle seems complete. May the Magic City prosper again in this new era.