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## Inside Art with Michael Rose - RI Photo Center Highlights Female Artists

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*Michael Rose, Art Contributor*



*PHOTO: Michael Rose*

Women have long contributed to the photographic art form. From the famed nineteenth-century British portraitist Julia Margaret Cameron, to important artists like Cindy Sherman or Deana Lawson working today, women's voices have indelibly shaped the history of photography. On view through March 11 at the Rhode Island Center for Photographic Arts (RICPA) in Providence, a special exhibition celebrates contemporary women artists. The show, titled *Stitches in Time*, offers an engaging collection of work by five women who are using photography to share their stories. The result is deeply compelling.

On view through March 11, *Stitches in Time* was curated by Massachusetts-based artist and educator Emily Belz. The thought-provoking exhibition features work by Becky Behar, Coco McCabe, Michelle Peterson, Gail Samuelson, and Erin Sweeney. The undergirding thread between all the work is a focus on ties that bind; on connectivity, on how places, families, and artworks are knit together.

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PHOTO: Michael Rose

On view across the rounded wall of one distinct gallery space at RICPA, Becky Behar's photographs in the show are notable for their rich colors and storytelling. Behar, who was born in Colombia and now resides outside Boston, notes influences from master painters like Vermeer and Caravaggio. This interest can be seen distinctly in her dramatic and well-constructed photographic compositions

that read like works from the art historical canon. Behar's images examine the meanings of family through her role as a mother.

Turning the notion of history into something personal is Coco McCabe. In her diptych images, viewers will find poignant explorations of that artist's family past and genealogy. McCabe's career as a photographer has brought her to impoverished communities in Africa, East Asia, and Central America. Her recent body of work in the exhibition resulted from pandemic isolation forcing her to turn her gaze inward. Excavating her archive, she created photographs that probe familial narratives. The completed imagery is sensitive and poetic.



PHOTO: Michael Rose

Michelle Peterson's work focuses squarely on motherhood and the domestic realm. Peterson's photographs in *Stitches in Time* were created using pinhole cameras made from her grandmother's flour boxes. One of these homemade cameras is on view alongside her work, giving viewers a glimpse of her process. Adjacent to her painterly photographic images, Peterson is also exhibiting a collection of embroideries she created to reflect the changes which occurred in her body over the span of her pregnancy. In both bodies of work, Peterson employs historic methods of making to craft objects with contemporary impact.



*PHOTO: Michael Rose*

Fabric is the focus of artwork presented by Gail Samuelson. The photographer comes from a family of New York dressmakers and her inherent knowledge of the subject matter comes across in carefully studied images of seams and surfaces. Samuelson relishes in the details and craftsmanship behind garments and creates photographs that are soft but wonderfully precise.

Not all the work in the show abides by strict definitions of photography. While Michelle Peterson's embroidery is on view in one corner of the gallery, mixed media works by Erin Sweeney can be found throughout the space. Sweeney's handmade books deal with themes that crossover and connect many of the photographs in the show and act as a textural counterpoint to the smoothness and sleekness of photographic images. They add still more dimension to an exhibition that already enjoys a richness of content.





PHOTO: Michael Rose

At about five years old, the Rhode Island Center for Photographic Arts is one of the state's newest cultural organizations. Perched in a second-floor space at 118 North Main Street, the Center makes its home just around the corner from long-established organizations like the Rhode Island School of Design. RICPA mounts regular exhibitions with a special focus on photography and artworks that employ photographic processes. *Stitches in Time* is one in a long line of finely crafted photography exhibitions hosted at this unique venue. Alongside the gallery exhibition, RICPA's website [www.riphotocenter.org](http://www.riphotocenter.org) is packed with complementary material and information that supports and enlivens visitor experience.



*PHOTO: Michael Rose*

*Stitches in Time* includes the work of five talented women who have lengthy and fascinating resumes. In this small cross-section, one finds a group of artists who are actively contributing to the illustrious history of photography while exploring deeply resonant themes. The show assembled by curator Emily Belz spotlights the experiences of its exhibitors. In giving women artists this platform to show their work, Belz and RICPA have also provided these art-makers with an engaging platform to share their experiences and, by extension, the experiences of many other women throughout the region and beyond.

*Stitches in Time* is on view at the Rhode Island Center for Photographic Arts through March 11. RICPA is located at 118 North Main Street in Providence and the gallery is open Thursdays - Saturdays, from 12 pm - 6 pm each day. For more information, visit [www.riphotocenter.org](http://www.riphotocenter.org).