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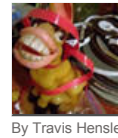
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Capsule Art Reviews: "Amy Blakemore: Photographs 1988-2008", "The Paramilitary Show", "Adela Andea: The Green™ cyber web"

By Kelly Klaasmeyer Wednesday, Sep 2 2009 Comments (0) AAA

"Amy Blakemore: Photographs 1988-2008" The photographs Amy Blakemore takes with a crappy plastic camera can make you cry. Dad (1999) is an image from this exhibition, a 20-year survey of the artist's work at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. The entire time I was in the gallery, people kept stopping and lingering in front of the photo Blakemore took of her father, Robert Blakemore, just after he died. Images of death lure people in, but usually it's the shocking photojournalistic kind. This simple, quiet picture dunks your head in a bucket of loss. Every photo captures a particular moment in time, but Blakemore's capture concentrated doses of human experience. If you know her work at all, you probably know that she shoots her photographs exclusively with a Diana camera. The Diana is a 1960s plastic camera made in Hong Kong by the "Great Wall Plastic Factory." The Diana was so cheap, it was given away as a carnival prize. But the sheer crappiness of the camera is part of the appeal. Its inherent defects — the photos it produces are vignettted and blurry, with low-contrast, oddly colored images — yield haunting images in Blakemore's hands. Amy Blakemore should be a lot better known than she is. Her work merits it. But she's a solid, thoughtful artist, not a careerist, as low-key and unassuming as her work and her choice of camera equipment. This survey, sensitively curated by the MFAH's Alison de Lima Greene, is well deserved. Through September 13. 1001 Bissonnet. . — KK

"The Paramilitary Show" This may sound like some dress parade of shadowy armed guerilla groups, but it's actually an art exhibition at the Houston Fire Museum, organized by Apama Mackey Gallery and featuring the work of eight artists. Standout works include Ronald Moran's giant pair of army boots, taller than a man, which greet you when you walk in the door. Crafted from white quilt batting, the massive objects appear ethereal and cloudlike. Walk up the stairs and you can smell burnt wood. It's Patrick Renner's art; Renner constructed a cluster of long, slender wooden ladders, their

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ends singed. They're kind of [Dr. Seuss](#) and kind of disturbing at the same time. The museum is in an old fire station — the second floor housed the living quarters and locker room for the firemen. For opening night, [Ariane Roesch](#) hung her work behind a shower curtain. Her soft sculpture incorporated a centerfold and a red-plastic button that made the sound of a siren when you pushed it. Siren — siren, get it? But if you didn't see this work opening night, you're not going to. It's gone. The museum judged it too steamy for touring schoolchildren. Through September 19. Houston Fire Museum, 2403 Milam Street, . —**KK**

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- [Amy Blakemore](#) [Robert Blakemore](#)
- [Adela Andea](#) [Houston Fire Museum](#)
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"Adela Andea: The Green™ cyber web" Adela Andea's work in [Lawndale's](#) Project Space is one of the best installations the space has seen. The Romanian-born artist has created an environment that feels both techno and surreal, with a dash of Kafka. It's reminiscent of an Eastern European disco — in a good way. Andea crafted giant spiders and shell- or cocoon-like shapes in white hydrocal, lit from within by a harsh reddish-orange light. The jointed, motorized spider legs move slowly and ominously. Short, slender, glowing rods of cold cathode fluorescent light in green and blue hang all over the room, with wires forming a tangled kind of web. The lights alter the colors in the room, turning it from, say, orange into the color of past-the-date beef. Small, square LED case fans (used to cool computers) are suspended in the space, spinning and humming, shaking slightly with their effort. It's an incredibly strange and highly original environment, and the seemingly disparate elements work together to create something otherworldly. Through September 26. [Lawndale Art Center](#), 4912 Main, . — **KK**

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