

Museum of photography unveils new home

Mori Hosseini Center to house, display 3,000 photos

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DAYTONA BEACH — A floating staircase spirals from wood floor to space, reflecting off sterile white walls and beaming with light from an unknown source.

Photos in shadow-box frames are the only inhabitants of the silent behemoth Southeast Museum of Photography now, but on Nov. 3, the museum will serve out its mission in a way that has not

yet been achieved in its 15-year history at the Daytona Beach Community College.

After two years of construction, the museum has been relocated to the resplendent new Mori Hosseini Center on West International Speedway Boulevard.

This Saturday, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., the museum invites the entire region to submerge in four stunning exhibits by international artists.

Built with funding from the college and about \$6 million of grants and donations, the new facility has more than 30,000 square feet.

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Randy Barber/staff photographer

Director Kevin Miller of the Southeast Museum of Photography speaks about the work in progress at the new Mori Hosseini Center at Daytona Beach Community College. The center is finishing up on last minute details for the museum opening on Nov. 3.

Museum

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The gallery represents less than half of that space, museum director Kevin Miller said.

The rest of the space is used for research, education and growth. A new library houses a catalog of 5,000 artists. Across the hall, an atrium/reception area, gift shop and café entice guests, 60 percent of whom are locals unaffiliated with DBCC.

The museum also has a new art preparation center for framing and mounting and a temperature-controlled, security-alarmed, concrete-encased storage room for the museum's 3,000-photo permanent collection.

These last two facets give the facility its credibility in a world where artists choose their works' homes based on confidence, Mr. Miller said.

Mr. Miller said there are only three other photography museums like his in the entire country, two in California and one in Chicago.

While most photography museums tend to show "super-attractive cutting edge or super-safe vintage shows," the Southeast Museum specializes in photojournalism.

"We've got a long track record of having the best of this kind of work," he said. "Unless there's some hot-button issue, (most museums) won't go out on a limb to show anything original."

Unlike a traditional

photo gallery, the Southeast Museum of Photography also provides programming and literature to place the photos in context, Mr. Miller said.

The intent of the museum is to meet visitors on different levels.

"Some shows are more esoteric and some are more accessible," he said. "You have to build the capacity of the audience to understand what they see so they can grow with you."

The museum's first four exhibits represent this educational aspect.

National Geographic photographer Steve McCurry's exhibit "The Path to Buddha" has never been shown before; to explain the soul-catching photos of Tibetans, the library will have books available on the culture and religion and lectures will be offered.

The exhibitions by Andre Kertesz and Shahzad Kamel are also original, while those shadow-boxed graphic photos by Iranian film-maker Abbas Kiarostami juxtapose wall-sized panels with history and background.

As part of the museum's relationship with the college, 12 student and recent graduate interns frame photos, prepare exhibits and work on marketing.

Exhibit coordinator Juliana Romnes completed DBCC's photography program and then finished her bachelor's degree at the University of Central Flori-

da's Daytona Beach campus next door.

"Whether a photo is happy or sad, whether it's war or nature, everyone has a different path to connect to a photo," she said. "A lot of people can relate to the history."

Student photography is not displayed in the museum, except for a summer graduation show.

"Student work is immature and it lacks the complexity ... of great work," Mr. Miller said. "Sophisticated work achieves a level of coherence that's capable of sustaining every audience."

"A simple picture is no more art than a single word is literature."

To work more with students, Mr. Miller is proposing DBCC and UCF partner for programs in museum curating, museum education and technical assistance.

Within the next five-to-seven years, Mr. Miller hopes the museum will be able to turn the entire ground floor into a permanent display on the history of photography in culture and society.

This would fulfill the museum's responsibility to sustaining the medium, while giving it an exhibit that exists nowhere else in the world, Mr. Miller said.

"If we don't show this stuff," he said, "not one single place will."

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