

# ARTS &

## Desire and Otherness: A Chance to See

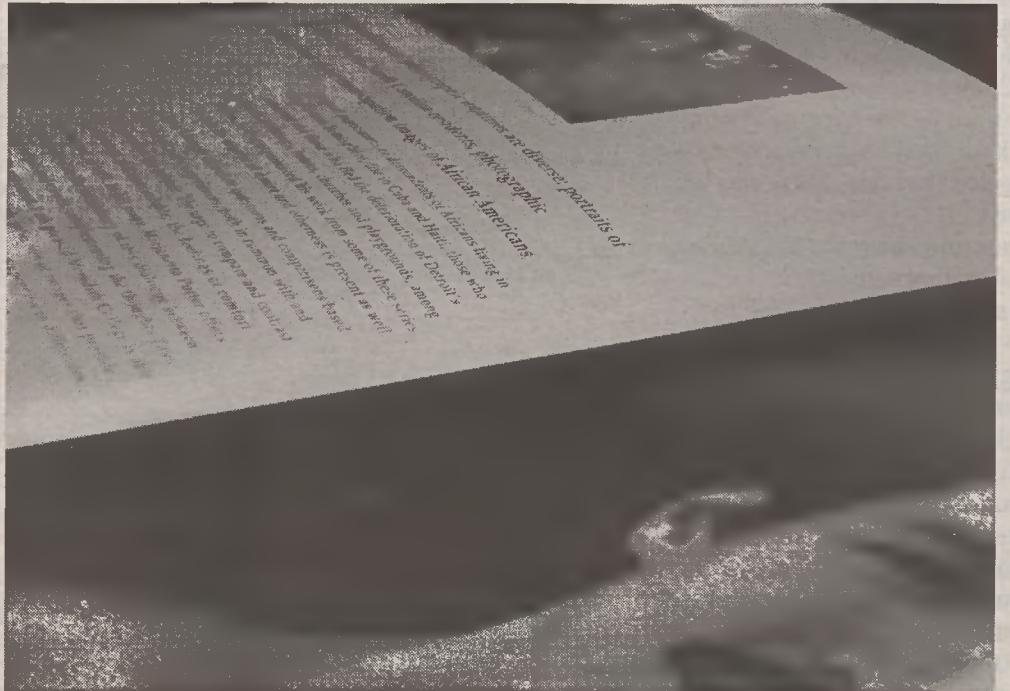
Kristen Gallagher, Staff Writer

The Frankie G. Weems Gallery in the Gaddy-Hamrick Art Building is currently, and will be until April 4, 2010, home to twenty-one large scale photographic prints by Titus Brooks Heagins. Based in Durham, North Carolina, Brooks took the photos in the exhibition in such places as Cuba, China, Japan, Haiti, Detroit, and other American towns. The Gallery Director here at Meredith, Ann Roth, said of Brooks' work: "Titus's images stimulate questions and comparisons based upon the viewer's experiences, both in common with and different from the subject." This statement, found in the exhibition catalog, is perhaps a powerful indicator of what you will step into as you go through the gallery doors.

If you went to the exhibition opening on February 7, you might've been overwhelmed by the number of people gathered outside the gallery at the food table. After squeezing your way through and around the corner, you would've been even more surprised to see that you couldn't see anything. That's the way it is on the first day of most any show opening – the gallery is cramped with people

milling around, chatting among themselves about the validity and clarity of the art. Therefore, I suggest you visit the Weems Gallery on any old day that is not the opening day, just so you can mill around quietly, wondering to yourself what these photos say. And trust me, you'll want to ask yourself that as you stop in front of each photograph.

The works in the Desire and Otherness exhibition ponder the questions of race and identity, of surface appearance and commercial life. In his catalog essay, Heagins defined otherness as "difference...manifested by race, class, gender and/or some other visual markers." In the works posted on the gallery walls, you will see faces that call to you. Eyes that ask what you're looking at. Expressions that say 'this is me, and I don't care what you think about it.' These are the emotions created by Heagins' photographs, and you won't be able to escape them. For instance, in one photograph, entitled Papa's Petite Princess, there is a little girl against a blue wall. She does not look directly out at you and her eyes won't meet yours. This



a view of the Desire and Otherness exhibition, photograph by Kristen Gallagher

picture is documenting something – she is from Haiti, she wears a stained and ragged Disney Princess shirt, there is tension and hope in her gaze. Truly, the purpose of all art may be that the viewer should understand and take something from it. Ask yourself what you see or what you feel. note how you react, and ask yourself why.

On page eleven of the show catalog, there is a headline quote: "His

portraits validate their lives and their humanity." Conceivably, their portraits could be what validate our lives; we stare at their unchanging faces, wondering what could possibly be going on in their skulls, forcing us to wonder the same about ourselves. Take these snapshots for yourself, and take a quiet day to mill around.



A behind the scenes look at preparations for the 2010 Meredith Theatre production of *Kabuki Lady Macbeth*. The students pictured are Stacie Whitley, Renee Ohe, and Sheryl Scott

## What's Up In Raleigh

- Barbie – Simply Fabulous at 50! NC Museum of History, 12/4/2009 - 7/5/2010
- From Site to Studio, the Southern Landscape by Judy Crane Artspace, 1/8/2010 - 2/20/2010
- The Secrets That We Keep by David Eichenberger, Artspace, 1/23/2010 - 2/27/2010
- Author of "Complaint-Free Relationships" Shares Insight at Unity Church of the Triangle at the Long View Center, 2/20/2010
- African American History Tour NC Museum of History, 2/20/2010
- Free Thursdays at The Nascher Museum at Duke University – 5-9 p.m.
- NC Comedy Arts Festival, Feb 4-27
- Theater in the Park, Don't Cry for Me Margaret Mitchell, Feb 18-21