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RISD Museum celebrates wonders of visual art

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A bird in the hand



JOURNAL PHOTOS / GLENN OSMUNDSON

IN THE SHADOWS: Leland Faulkner, mime, magician and a storyteller who also plays with shadows, gives a demonstration of his work to a photographer before his free show yesterday at RISD Auditorium in Providence. Above, Faulkner uses his head and hands to form an owl and then jack-o'-lantern, while below he creates a bunny, camel and swan.

RISD Museum celebrates wonders of visual art

BY KAREN A. DAVIS
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

PROVIDENCE — Yesterday was a picture day of sorts at the Rhode Island School of Design Museum.

The scene in the museum's print classroom resembled school picture day, as families took turns having their Polaroid photos snapped at the end of a workshop on the inner workings of a camera.

With a canvas-backed flashbulb stand perched in the corner, a photographer from AS220 Broad Street Studio counted to three, pushed a button and created the take-home family photos from an old-fashioned 4x5, tripod-anchored camera.

The workshop and museum galleries that honored the work of acclaimed photographer Aaron Siskind were part



of "Picture This!" — the museum's daylong celebration of visual art.

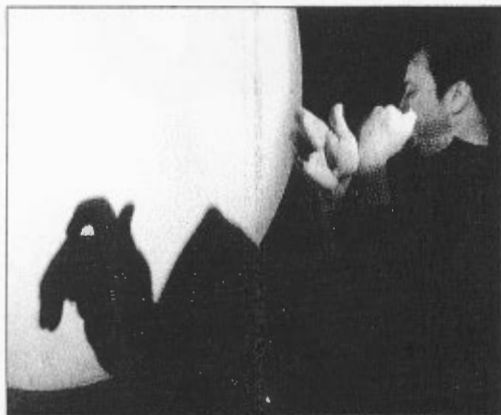
The celebration also included workshops on making string art and photo puzzles, amateur-art exhibitions and a scavenger hunt featuring a search for specific Siskind photos.

Paul Phou, 6, of Warwick, who harbors a love for photography, had anxiously awaited the event, which was held as part of the museum's monthly Free-For-All Saturday program.

"He said 'Mommy, Mommy, I can't wait for that one,'" said

Paul's mother, Serei Tan, who brings Paul and his sister Nora, 10, to the free programs each month.

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RISD

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"It's very educational," she said. "I like to bring them so that they can see different activities and learn about different things."

Tan's family was not the only one drawn to the event by a love of photography and a desire to expand horizons.

Also in attendance were newcomers, such as Karen Monti and her daughter Alexa, 13, of East Greenwich.

Alexa, who plans to take up photography as a hobby and has a camera topping her Christmas list, was first to arrive for the workshop on the history and inner workings of a camera, presented by AS220 Broad Street Studio.

She listened as high school junior Sheri Newton explained that she "had no clue" about cameras when she entered a class at the Broad Street Studio two years ago. But yesterday, Newton worked with Scott Lapham and Eric Link to dissect and reassemble the 4x5 cameras, which she said are still most effective in taking portraits.

The Monti family was inspired to come to the museum because they wanted to expose their out-of-town guests to "cultural offerings in Rhode Island," Karen Monti said.



Yesterday's museum activities ended an hour early so that participants could attend a performance by Leland Faulkner, an internationally acclaimed mime/magician/shadow puppeteer who presented a show in the RISD Auditorium.

Faulkner, who was born in Afghanistan to Native American parents, uses a mixture of hand shadows, pantomime, humor and storytelling to take his audience on a tour through his "world of wonder," the title of his performance.

One of the highlights of his show incorporates his skills as a magician — turning a paper swan that he received from a group of children from Hiroshima, Japan into a live dove, as a symbol of peace.

Faulkner — who spent 20 years touring as a theater performer before spending 7 years in the film industry — said he returned to theater performing because he prefers the immediate response of a live audience.

"If it [my performance] evokes a little bit of wonder, than I'm doing my job," Faulkner said.

CHILD'S PLAY: Sarah Andrews, 6, left, and her brother William, 4, make a string of beads at the RISD Museum yesterday.

JOURNAL PHOTO / GLENN OSMUNDSON