



David Trautrimas: *Coifer for Teams*, 2008, archival pigment print, 21 x 19 inches, image courtesy PhotoEye Gallery

Michael Abatemarco | For The New Mexico
Not available in stores

When Toronto-based artist David Trautrimas was traveling through Buffalo, New York, a couple of years ago, he stopped to photograph the trees growing on top of the Buffalo Central Terminal. The rail terminal, no longer in use, has fallen into disrepair and is overgrown with vegetation. It gave Trautrimas, who photographs old appliances to create images of fantasy buildings, the idea of adding trees to the roofs of his architectural marvels. The difference between the Buffalo terminal and Trautrimas' residential buildings is that the terminal is abandoned, while the structures in the artist's photomontages are places that, despite only subtle indications of a human presence in their otherwise empty, less conventional, more merely open, but often the better, for instance, which depicts a residential structure with a design inspired by the components of an actual coffee pot, the trees do not grow wildly on the roofs and terraces but look as if they were deliberately placed.

Trautrimas understands that were these actual buildings, they would not be architecturally sound, but the modification of the original appliances has enabled him to consider them from another perspective. For instance, *Waffle Iron Heights*, another of Trautrimas' odd structures, depicts milk-waffles. It is, in the artist's imagining, a place where people live, but such a structure is not likely to ever get made. The artist manages to make his creations look like appliances while, at the same time, they look like habitations.

Habitat Machines opening Friday, July 10, at Photo-eye Gallery features 12 of Trautrimas' images. Although he is a photographer, Trautrimas admits to an interest in architecture. "I was influenced by Buckminster Fuller and Frank Gehry," he told *Pasatiempo* in a recent interview, "but also by Bernard Tschumi's *The Architects were German* photographers who photographed industrial structures such as water towers and grain elevators. Trautrimas, by contrast, chooses vintage cameras, old cars, toons, and posters, as well as other household appliances. Still, his work shares aspects of architectural design. "There are some inspirations in Eastern Europe that have come from the images from an architectural perspective," he said.

Trautrimas relied on a number of sources for the appliances he photographed for *Habitat Machines*. "I went out and looked for them," he said. "I'm always going out to yard sales and church basars, but I also find them on eBay and Craigslist." To create *Sprinkler House*, another impossible residence, Trautrimas found an old sprinkler that he extremely dismantled, photographing each component separately against a neutral background. Then, he reassembled the images in Photoshop, adding landscape elements from photos that he took in and around Toronto. The finished image shows the "building" by itself, with for other features surrounding it have a trash receptacle to the left of the residence, a winding drive, and a manufactured ledge to the right — elements that were also added via Photoshop. *Sprinkler House* came his workshop. These, too, are from Trautrimas' original photographs, taken from real buildings in Toronto.

All of the images in *Habitat Machines* were made this way. Trautrimas looks for old objects, with worn finishes and metal parts. "I find that still objects there is so much plastic involved," he said, "but with the

David Trautrimas' *Habitat Machines*
 look like advertisements offering
 unique living opportunities.

Waffle Iron Heights, 2008, archival pigment print, 25 x 33 inches

Space Heater Place, 2008, archival pigment print, 28 x 20 inches

landscapes, apparently still maintaining those areas. *Waffle Iron Heights* is particularly dark. The sky is a heavy grey, and the trees are beads of foliage. Look closely at the waffle bungee that, were it being used for its intended purpose, would account for the grid pattern on a cooked waffle. Yes, these are windows. *Waffle Iron Heights* is an imposing and reflecting place.

Also on display at Photo-eye is the black and white desert landscape photography of Mitch Deltmore. Both artists attend the opening reception of *Habitat Machines*.

In addition to Trautrimas' 12 photographs, Photo-eye Gallery is hosting a limited-edition book of the artist's work, presented in an standard aluminum box. Each book contains a signed pigment-ink print of a new work that is not represented in the exhibit. It might be fun to try to pick out the various components Trautrimas has organized into these "houses of the future" — and to decide which one you'd prefer to live in. 111 rue Sprinkler House. ♦

details

- David Trautrimas: *Habitat Machines*
- Opening reception 5-7 p.m. Friday, July 10, through Sept. 12
- Photo-eye Gallery, 2704 Garcia Dr., 9860130