

Somber Snapshots from Pennsylvania to Cuba

Photographer Francie Bishop Good focuses on the present while reflecting on the past.

By Phillip Valys, SouthFlorida.com

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Francie Bishop Good's new photo exhibit begins, as do many of her nostalgic portraits, with her childhood in the suburbs of Orefield, Penn. In the early 1960s, Good would take her mint-green point-and-shoot to nearby Allentown, a city where leisure could be found in the old Hess's department store (now long-shuttered), and fun could be had on the wet slopes of Apple Hill (also closed), a ski resort to the northeast.

These romantic snapshots do not, however, appear in Good's "Far From Apple Hill" exhibition. For Good, 63, Apple Hill reflects some hazy, idyllic memory of innocence, and so do the images on display at Miami's David Castillo Gallery. Here, Good trains her lens at diverse subjects, from single mothers and their children at the Susan B. Anthony Recovery Center in Pembroke Pines to the beaches of Havana.

"It's a title that I chose because I really wanted to personalize it, and group these images in terms of psychological feeling and environmental change," the Fort Lauderdale resident says about the exhibit, which opens Thursday, April 11. "I go back to my hometown a couple times every year, and about six months ago, I photographed my neighbor who never moved or changed her wallpaper in 50 years. But I never really liked any of the photos."

What Good does like, more so than plumbing her past, is finding the somberness and vulnerability of the present. The exhibit includes 11 photographs, some of them photojournalistic, including one of a boy blowing birthday-party horns in the hallway of a recovery center in "After the Party," and another of an abandoned pink tricycle on the campus' sidewalk at sunset. In "Pink Family," Good visits the apartment of a mother and her newborn dressed in a pink tutu. She snaps a candid of the baby asleep on the kitchen table at the moment its mother approaches with a pink blanket.

"The best pictures I like to capture are when the façade is dropped," says Good, who says she was drawn to recovery centers partly because her son, now an adult, was in one. "The mother was about to pose with her baby, but I took the picture in between poses. It's a pretty strange picture, I guess. But they are themselves."

Several of the images focus on the weather-worn city walls and stark living rooms of Havana, part of a trip Good took with friend and Cuban poet Víctor Rodríguez Nunez in June. Her "Boy and Bottle" image captures a teenage boy standing near a broad esplanade in Malecon, Havana, a torn umbrella flapping in the background. But Good found her most-solemn moments with Rodríguez's elderly mother, seen in "One Eye" peering through a missing windowpane from a room filled with rocking

chairs and Frida Kahlo posters. Nunez, whose mother passed away in November, will read a poem inspired by Good's visit at 1 p.m. April 26 at David Castillo Gallery. Admission will be free.

"I still try to find that strange individuality in my photos, but I think you can find it anywhere," Good says with a laugh. "I went everywhere, anyway."

Francie Bishop Good: Far From Apple Hill

When: Through May 4

Where: David Castillo Gallery, 2234 NW Second Ave., Miami

Cost: Free

Contact: 305-573-8110 or DavidCastilloGallery.com