

## “An Extraordinary Document of Our World” Review:

It feels as though you’ve stepped into a room with living, breathing characters framed on every wall, each of them inviting you to step a little closer and listen a little harder as they whisper their stories through the film.

French photographer, Gilles Perrin, is the man who, armed with his vintage, large-format camera, breathes vitality into each and every black-and-white portrait. His latest exhibition, “An Extraordinary Document of Our World,” juxtaposes subjects from all corners of the earth and highlights the similarities of human beings. Each subject is shown in their natural state, generally performing daily, occupational tasks.

As I walk around the gallery, I notice the placement of each portrait— all surrounded by whitewashed walls, the men and women of similar occupations, poses, and societal roles are placed together. This arrangement is the vision of Professor Howard Bossen, the curator of the exhibit. On one wall, he brings together a couple of “shopkeepers” from Pleasant Lake, MI with two “farmers” from the hillside of France—here the lives of two couples who will likely never meet have been intertwined through the framing of Perrin’s photographs.

I asked Perrin what he hoped his photographs would convey to his audience. He told me, “Notice the face, the eyes of the person you are looking at... and just think of your feelings looking at that portrait.” He explained that his portraits were meant to evoke emotion and his wife, Nicole Ewencyk, added, “There is not one specific reaction that Gilles is looking to create, every person will feel differently and respond differently.” Ewencyk interviewed the subjects of Perrin’s concurrent “Detroit Resurgent” exhibit, lending an even more multidimensional aspect to the portraits included in the exhibit.

As I drifted through the gallery, every once in a while a certain expression would cause me to pause and wonder: What is her story beyond the photo? How old is she? Is she happy? And then the realization: I am no different from any of the subjects of these photos. We are separated by oceans and continents, we lead vastly different lives, and yet the attachment I feel proves that I, and they, are nothing but human. Perrin has discovered that when the colors are dulled to a monochromatic black-and-white, when the photos are taken deliberately and thoughtfully, a light begins to illuminate the presence of human connection.

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