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## ART REVIEW

### Journeying beyond vacation

By Alan G. Artner

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"Are we there yet?" is the impatient cry of children engaged in travel. It implies a destination but also shows uncertainty about what that is. It suggests the children know where they're going only when they arrive, and ultimately that may be less important than the time they spend in passage.

"Are We There Yet?"—a show of work by mostly photographers at the Hyde Park Art Center—is about such travel. Far from a feel-good summer exhibition, it contains no conventional scenic views; its places may be hazy, unrecognizable or imagined; and the "there" could sometimes be "here," that is, a home made strange by inhabitants or signs of imminent departure.

In our season for vacations, the artists go beyond the wanderlust of leisure to deal with possibly enforced travel (Surendra Lawoti, Rula Halawani), travel for the sake of remembering or memorializing (Howard Henry Chen, Alan Cohen), the disappointment of travel (Oscar Palacio) and travel as an interior journey (Curtis Mann). The disparate subjects usually are treated in color, though two series are in black and white, and the show departs from still images to include a color video.

The 12-minute piece by Adriana Rios, about time and waiting, gives an inner dimension to travel. The extreme of this is represented by appropriated images that Mann bleaches and draws upon until they become virtually complete inventions.

Other works are more familiar but just a bit "off," as when Palacio shoots tourist destinations as grand and imposing and, ultimately, a letdown, or Christine DiThomas blurs generic American scenes until they're at the threshold of recognizability.

The practice of staging photos within one's own family becomes more tiresome every day. But Aaron Gent's tableaux of a family retreat have a troubling undercurrent caused by the presence of his aunt, who has Down syndrome, and that sets them apart from more expected scenes of the upper-middle class at play.

Where those images rely on detail, others are pared down, minimal. Cohen's shots of markings at the Panama Canal drain the violence that occurred there, becoming abstractions. Lawoti's images of single, apparently unused objects come clear only as a series that suggests a household about to move.

Such variety makes this summer show more provocative than diverting.

*Curated by photographer Dawoud Bey, "Are We There Yet?" continues at the Hyde Park Art Center, 5020 S. Cornell Ave., through Sept. 28. 773-324-5520.*

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