

PHOENIX New Times



photos by Peter Scanlon

Nissa Kubly, 29

Don't pigeonhole Nissa Kubly... she's an artist, but also an inventor and a scientist. What's clear is her passion for one place — the brink of discovery. Almost any day, you can find Kubly tinkering in her Phoenix studio — a converted garage crammed with books, tools and projects in process, decorated with dozens of pictures taped to the walls, from celebrated inventors to vintage microscopes.

An exhibition at Lisa Sette Gallery features Kubly's latest inventions: camera obscuras (and the photos they make) as works of art. Represented by a first-rate art dealer

(Sette signed Kubly at her Arizona State University thesis show), in love with fiancé Jason Sellers (a Phoenix architect — their wedding is set for August), and moving to bigger digs (for a bigger art studio and backyard for their beloved Maya — a Greyhound/Doberman mix). Kubly agrees that, lately, she feels like a 21st-century happily-ever-after.



Picture this

Camera obscura means "dark room." It can be any dark chamber — a box or room with a small opening. The mechanism is simple... the opening allows a small amount of light to enter. This

light — from the subject matter outside the chamber traveling through the hole — appears as an inverted image on the opposite wall. I created a camera obscura in brass and metal as a graduate student after learning about vintage cameras in a photo class. The camera stirred up my main interests — art, science and invention — and I was hooked.

I spy with my little camera

I made a fun belt buckle camera obscura and wore it to a party. Just hanging with friends, I was pushing this little button on my belt buckle taking pictures — like a spy. I like to document things. Another cool camera was my sealing wax camera including a personalized initial emblem. The wax melts to emboss the initial, covering the pinhole at the right exposure time. I also made a bracelet camera, but the film canister was a bit small. I'm reworking that one. It's tough getting it to look right as jewelry and still be highly functional.



backpack to take pictures. While artists hung out in their studios, my studio was the whole outdoors. Some of the pictures are of a ghost town near the center, shot mostly with my double-exposure camera obscura, which gives you two images with a mysterious overlapping of form — showing a landscape, for instance, that can or can't exist. They're in the Sette show. — By Amy Abrams

"The Work of Nissa Kubly" continues through June 25 at Lisa Sette Gallery, 4142 North Marshall Way in Scottsdale. Call 480-990-7342 or see www.lisasettegallery.com.

Bling things

My master's is in jewelry, as well as metal. I enjoy making and wearing jewelry. And while I showed some of my pieces — silver jewelry, some with stones — at Art Detour and have representation at a gallery in Missouri, my true love is the camera.



Do the math

My dad is a mechanical engineer, so I grew up with machine-based construction. It's funny; math and science were everything to my dad. It didn't interest

me; I studied art. Yet now, most of what I make is based on math and science. Both my parents are Swiss... this means *everything* must be in its place, organized, structured, every detail noticed. Put engineering on top of that. This is why I can spend six hours working one small corner of a camera until I get it right.

On the ranch

Last fall, I did a terrific two-month residency at Anderson Ranch, an art center near Aspen. My focus was using versus making the cameras. I set out hiking each day with four of my camera obscuras and film in my



Historic Building, Aspen



Ditch Trail