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Lehman Exhibit Packs a Punch

By JORDAN MOSS

The first room of the Lehman College Art Gallery's two-room photography exhibit showcases only one of the four artists featured in the "New Works" show presented by En Foco, a photography group based on Kingsbridge Road. But photographs by Tertuliano Delgado on display there pack the literal and figurative wallop of a fine art show all its own.

Delgado's serious photos all focus on young people in boxing gyms around Connecticut, in inner cities like Waterbury and Hartford. There's a silence to the photos that sometimes conveys a quiet determination or an unsettling fatalism — a sense that, for these kids, the gym represents hope's last chance.

The photo "Coronation" depicts a boy's head gear being placed on him by a coach. But it feels more like he's being protected from something more harmful and uncertain than the practice round he's about to fight.

No one is smiling or joshing around in this exhibit, as you might

expect with kids, though there is a joyfulness to two little boys sticking out their ribby chests in what must be an exercise routine.

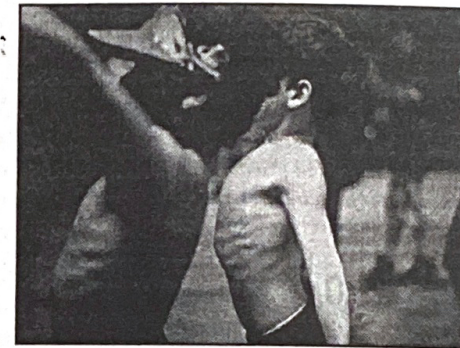
The 28-year-old Connecticut resident's photos also include blurred images of fighters in the ring. The deliberate lack of focus seems emblematic of the exhibit. It's hard to get a handle on why these kids are here — for love of the sport, or for a dream of success that will probably elude most of them?

The only girl in the exhibit is

Tabitha, a teenager holding a punching bag. Even more than the others, there is a big question mark here. What is her role? Why is she here? What does she want to be when she grows up? While the boys fight in the ring, she is left outside it and there's nothing in the photo to suggest that she is a fighter, too.

These are strong, beautiful photos — warm, sepia-tone prints that find beauty in the rawness of a sweaty gym and in the hopes of young lives not fully formed and figured out.

The work of three other artists, in a second larger room, accompany Delgado's in the exhibit, which showcase the winners of En Foco's "New Works" awards. These are three very different photographers, two of whom use art and collage in addition to photographs, and another, Sheila



Shadow Caster I



Photos by Tertuliano Delgado

Coronation

Pree, whose 3-by-5 black-and-white prints offer glimpses of small-town life in the south. Pree's "Coming Home" series evokes a similar quietness and the hints of despair found in Delgado's photos — only one smile in the bunch — but there is a wider range of images, a couple of which are likely to elicit smiles in the viewer. For instance, an ordinary house turns out to be not so ordinary. Two large hearts are painted on the front of the house and next to each are the words, "Catherine Loves Johnnie."

If you like your photo exhibits to have happy endings, well, there it is.

Ed. note: "New Works" is on display at the Lehman College Art Gallery through Oct. 14. Gallery hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. For more information, call 960-8731. For more information on En Foco, call 584-7718.