

Enchanting allusions to landscape and memory

By Edward J. Sozanski

INQUIRER ART CRITIC

Poetic allusions to landscape and memory

GALLERIES

Muse. Gabrielle Russomagno's exhibition of photographs at Muse Gallery presents a provocative counterpoint to the the Sally Mann exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art. Russomagno's show also focuses on children, but her attitude toward her female subjects and the results she obtains are quite different.

Mann has become famous for photographing her three children na-

ked. She purports to be documenting the growing-up process in its natural state, but in fact she often manipulates her subject matter to achieve a Baby-Doll-meets-The-Waltons effect.

Russomagno doesn't have Mann's eye for the dramatic moment, or perhaps she simply chooses not to bother. Her photos of young girls doing ordinary things are themselves quite ordinary, in part, I think, because Russomagno's subjects aren't conditioned to posing.

She shows them at birthday parties, daubing themselves with perfume, lying on a frilly bed and playing on a swing. Her portraits are particularly fine, especially an after-the-bath portrait of a girl wrapped in a towel.

No more than four or five of these black-and-white prints are memorable by themselves, but the series communicates the mundane pleasures and anxieties of girlhood in a way that's ultimately affecting. Compared to Mann's images, Russomagno's call less attention to themselves, and as a result they bring you much closer to her subjects.

Muse, 60 N. Second St. Hours: noon to 6 p.m. Wednesdays through Sundays. Through Nov. 29. Phone: 215-627-5310.

■ The Arts listing, with museums and major art spaces, appears on Page 16.

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