

Published Thursday | March 13, 2008

## Staged reality is jarring in Bemis installation

BY DANE STICKNEY  
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Nic Nicosia's photographs leave viewers pondering one fundamental question. What is reality?



Nic Nicosia's works include "Untitled 16."

In Nicosia's artwork, it's difficult to tell.

Since the 1970s, Nicosia has garnered an international following for his works, which portray real-looking situations that are actually contrived. His most recent images - on display at the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts through May 17 - incorporate drawing, painting and installation, along with his photography.

Nicosia, who lives in Santa Fe, N.M., traditionally has staged photos as a commentary on American society - the isolation of suburbia or how Americans tend to cover up problems with smiling faces.

The photographer creates tension by using a camera - a stereotypically objective tool capturing only what it sees - to capture staged, subjective scenes. He's almost more a set-maker than a photographer because so much of his artistry comes before he even picks up a camera.

The Bemis exhibit - "Nic Nicosia: Drawing" - features real-life subjects standing against large backdrops that Nicosia drew or painted. In some of the images, it's initially difficult to tell what's drawn and what's real.

Nicosia is, in essence, blurring the lines of artistic media. The stark black-and-white works are a visual departure from Nicosia's older work, which often incorporated color and much more familiar scenes.

The spirit of the new images is the same, though. Nicosia is still prodding viewers to discern reality from manipulation in his creations and, ultimately, in their own surroundings.

### If you go!

"Nic Nicosia: Drawing," featuring work by the Santa Fe, N.M., artist, is on display at the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, 724 S. 12th St., through May 17. Admission is free. For details, visit [bemiscenter.org](http://bemiscenter.org) or call 341-7130.

Contact the Omaha World-Herald [newsroom](#)

Copyright ©2008 Omaha World-Herald®. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, displayed or redistributed for any purpose without permission from the Omaha World-Herald.