



Clockwise from top, part of Ethan Shoson and Carlo Quispe's "Red Badge of Courage" exhibition; Heien Stummer's photo of a Newark street shrine to victims of violence; William Coronado's "Wonder."



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Exhibits showcase Newark artists

ART

Red Badge of Courage and Gallery 744

Where: Newark National Building, sixth and first floors, respectively, 744 Broad St., Newark

When: Through Dec. 9. Open 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Wednesdays-Saturdays

How much: Free. Call (973) 643-1625 or visit www.newarkarts.org.

BY DAN BISCHOFF
STAR-LEDGER STAFF

The muscular figure is sculpted from sugar, rubber and coffee; and over his shoulder he is pulling a thick rope through a basket basket that is ripping a screaming human figure to pieces — tiny, scattered pieces, because that figure is made entirely out of rice.

The point of the sculpture by Latin American artist Fernando Mastrangelo, now of New York, is that commercial commodities leave little room to grow food for a disenfranchised population.

Mastrangelo and 65 other artists are featured in "Red Badge of Courage," a special exhibition in downtown Newark that runs through Dec. 9. The sixth annual Newark Arts Council Open Studios Tour went down two weeks ago and left in its wake several visual arts events, including two exhibitions in the Newark National Building downtown meant to showcase Newark artists.

"Red Badge of Courage" at the Newark National Building was curated by Omar Lopez-Chahoud, who named the show after the book by one of Newark's favorite sons, Stephen Crane, the war correspondent and novelist, and includes international and national artists as well as local ones. The other exhibit, Gallery 744, also in the Newark National Building, showcases Newark's own cadre of downtown artists, and was curated by Yoland Skrette, director of the Sumet Multidisciplinary Arts Center, and it includes the work of some 30 area artists.

All five of the previous Open Studio Tour exhibitions have been remarkable successes at trying to put the art scene in Newark in a national context, bringing famous international names and burgeoning gallery scenes on the other side of the river to downtown. And what they have all shown is how sympathetic the Newark scene is to other, far-flung art worlds, and how local artists hold their own in a much broader context.

There's plenty in "Red Badge" that speaks directly to Crane and war, a theme very much in all our thoughts this fall. There is, for example, a combination shadow-play and mini-mural devoted to Crane and the Civil War by Elhan Shoshan and Carlo Quispe. Dahlia Elsayed has executed a wall mural based on Crane's poetry that looks like a topographical map of battle, and Scott Hug has hung a silkscreen collage of New York Post covers showing a Marine smoking a cigarette with the headline, "Mariboro Men Kick Butts in Fallujah." Dumston Spear has done graffiti-influenced paintings that are based on lines from Crane poems.

Downtown, in the first floor space devoted to the 744 Gallery show, we see many of the folk we think about when we think of the arts in Newark, including floating cut-out nudes by William Coronado and wonderful, 6-inch by 10-inch close-ups of body parts ("Skinscapes") by Matthew Lahn, as well as a found-image collage by Newark's arch-camp-archeologist, Matt Gosser. There are photos of downtown Newark residents by Helen Stummer (who has her own retrospective up simultaneously at 8110 of 104 Third St.) and comparable work by Jeffery B. Williams.

