

Art

David Slovic's photographic compositions enter a new phase.

Hinting at the human figure

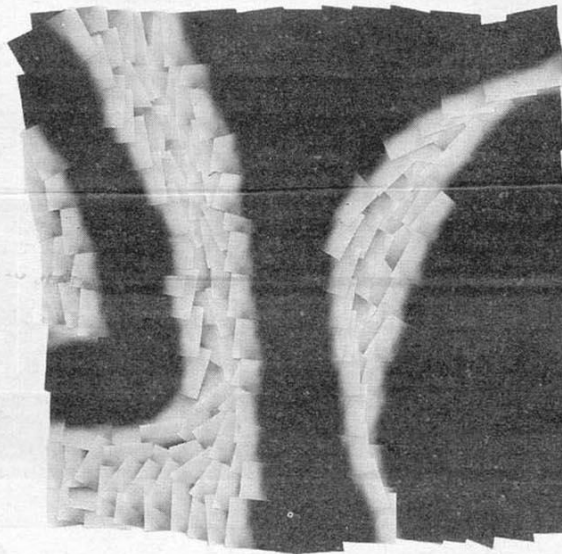
By Edith Newhall
FOR THE INQUIRER

In Philadelphia and elsewhere, David Slovic is known as an architect of minimal geometric buildings whose aesthetic runs to verticality, quirky combinations of industrial and organic materials, and a predilection for allowing the landscape in. (Louis I. Kahn, in whose office Slovic worked before starting his own firm, was a mentor.) But Slovic, who studied studio art as well as architecture at Cornell, has always kept one foot in the art world.

Over the years, he has participated in performances, created installations about his architecture, and photographed anonymous buildings with an almost Walker Evans zeal. (Slovic's images of vernacular architecture have appeared in books, among them *American Diner* and *Populuxe*.)

So, about six years ago, when Slovic began making photographic constructions, the surprise was not at his devotion to his art, but at the confidence, finesse and method of his abstractions. They gave the impression he had had them in mind for years.

From a distance, those first pieces, each one composed of black-and-white images printed from a single negative, could have passed for sculptural re-



David Slovic's "Smile," a photographic construction of multiple chromogenic prints, is among his recent works at the Gershman Y.

liefs. They also played with ideas of architecture and abstraction and photography and seriality. Although they contained no images of figures, just unidentifiable architectural details, and comprised many repetitions of a single image, they also had something of the effect of Warhol's

black-and-white photo-booth pictures and John Coplans' black-and-white shots of sections of his nude body.

Slovic's recent compositions, on view in the Gershman Y's Borowsky and Open Lens Galleries, do in fact engage the figure, if abstractly. They are composed

of color prints from more than one negative that look like close-ups of human bodies. (I think I also saw a spool of steel wire in two works.) The majority of these pieces are also larger than some of his earlier works, irregularly shaped, and unframed and mounted directly to the wall.

In image and format, the medium of painting seems the obvious reference here, and the human figure is also perceptible in his arrangements of prints — in *Lilith* (2004), for example, a dark central area is shaped like a torso and legs. Slovic seems to be having fun, too, quoting Marcel Duchamp's painting *Nude Descending a Staircase* in *Figure 2* (2005) or, most unexpected, the contemporary painter Elizabeth Murray, in his exuberant, almost cartoonishly sensuous *Tango* (2006).

It is always exciting to see an artist move from one chapter of work to the next, especially when the artist has the eye and the experience of Slovic. I wouldn't be surprised if landscape (maybe a serial, multifaceted one) were hovering somewhere in his future.

Gershman Y Center for Arts and Culture, 401 S. Broad St. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sundays through Fridays, closed Saturdays. Information: 215-446-3001 or www.GershmanY.org. Through Nov. 26.