

French Artist Looks to People, Forests in Show

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This photo of a mother and her three cubs grazing in a Finnish forest by French photographer Louis Marie Preau is part of "Of Forests and People." **Louis Marie Preau**

French artist Yann Arthus Bertrand has two exhibits on show at the Moscow Multimedia Arts Museum: "6 Billion Others," video exhibition of people from all over the world answering universal questions, and the photo exhibit "Of Forests and People."

Bertrand has been sending video crews all over the world since 2003 to interview people, asking each person about their fears, hopes and loves in an attempt to connect with viewers on a human level.

The exhibit takes up three floors of the museum, but the centerpiece is the movie "Mosaic," which links the various answers to show the similarities and differences in human experience.

One woman on video answers a question about forgiveness by talking about her experiences in

a genocide. For a question about fears, one man says his biggest fear is that God doesn't exist; another's is that he does exist.

The biggest laugh from the audience on opening night came when the film aired responses to the question, "What was your childhood dream?" Apparently, scores of people from all corners of the globe wanted to be pilots.

The participants continually name love and friends as the most important things in life, and self-consciously try to connect with viewers. "Is this really an image, or is it about people seeing reflections of themselves?" one woman says at the end of the movie.

"The message of the '6 Billion Others' project is the ancient Greek quote: Man is the measure of all things," Laurent Couraudon, president of BNP Paribas in Russia said at the opening. "'6 Billion Others' takes these words and translates them into modern language, letting all of Earth express this sentence."

The bank is the sponsor of the project.

If anyone wants to provide their own responses, you can go to 6millardsdautres.org and record your own video.

That exhibit is paired with another work by Bertrand, "Of Forests and People," which gathers great images from many different photographers including Brent Stirton's famous shot of a murdered gorilla in the Congo, being carried with a litter of saplings strapped to his back.

The shot won the World Press Photo award in 2007 and is one of a number of startling photos in the exhibit.

Couraudon attempted to connect the two together at the opening: "Man is the measure of all things, except our own home. 'Of Forests and People' conveys the respect that we owe to nature." But the link between the two is tenuous at best.

Nevertheless, both exhibits are worth seeing separately or at the same time.

"6 Billion Others" and "Of Forests and People" run until Sept. 4. Multimedia Art Museum. 16 Ulitsa Ostozhenka. Metro Kropotkinskaya. 637-1100, www.mdf.ru/english.

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