

# Exhibit puts attention to often ignored news vendors



CHRISTINE KIROUAC

Christine Kirouac's photos of Winston-Salem papermen will be on view at the Delta Arts Center in May.



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In her thought-provoking solo show at the Delta Arts Center, Christine Kirouac pays homage to Winston-Salem's pedestrian newspaper vendors.

"Papermen," as the show is titled, is a term commonly used for these hardworking individuals. Five days a week they spend long hours at several of the city's busiest intersections.

They subject themselves to all kinds of weather — not to mention inattentive drivers — in order to earn money selling copies of the Winston-Salem Journal to drivers.

The exhibition focuses a different kind of attention than

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DAVID ROLFE/JOURNAL

As part of her "Papermen" exhibit, Christine Kirouac has included a stack of bundled newspapers in the foreground of her photographs of streetcorner newspaper hawkers of the Winston-Salem Journal. One of the portraits will be available on the newspaper pile for gallery visitors to take home.

## Exhibit

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the cursory notice they tend to receive at their work stations — if they're noticed at all. Occupants of passing cars aren't likely to give any thought beyond their roles as "papermen."

In the informal portraits that are the project's primary components, Kirouac has photographed each man on the job, but without showing any background details in the frame. This strategy puts all the emphasis on the individual's body language, hair, clothing and — most important — the nuances of his face. You can plainly see every wrinkle, freckle, blotch and scar, and in most cases you can see the eyes as if they're looking right back at you.

Most of these men look like they've lived through some tough experiences. By their public presence on the city's medians and sidewalks, they assert their successes in surviving hardships. Kirouac's photographic presentation emphasizes their inherent dignity.



The original photographic portraits represent only one level of the project. They're not what you see in the exhibition at the Delta.

Prior to the exhibition, Kirouac had large-format versions of her original photo-portraits printed on newsprint sheets the same size as a full page in the Journal. She then laid each newsprint portrait on a stack of newspapers and re-photographed it so that a little of the newspaper is visible around the edges of each image. This multilayered approach alludes to both collage and sculpture, and it metaphorically unites Kirouac's subjects with the newspapers they sell.

It's the re-photographed images that are on view at the Delta — 20 of them. Each one is printed in high contrast on a black-and-white sheet of coated paper. Instead of displaying these prints in frames and behind glass — which would have literally and metaphorically separated them from viewers — she has pierced the upper corners of each one with grommet holes and hung it unframed from a pair of small nails.

Kirouac's subjects, identified on the wall labels only by their first names or nicknames, emphasize or de-emphasize their personalities in a variety of ways. The one identified as "Train" wears an umbrella hat and an almost defiant facial expression as he strikes a jaunty pose with his right hand on his hip and

## If you go

**Who:** Christine Kirouac

**What:** "Papermen"

**Where:** Delta Arts Center, 2671 New Walkertown Road

**When:** Through June 30

**Information:** Call (336) 722-2625 or visit [www.deltafinearts.com](http://www.deltafinearts.com)

his left clutching the handle of a metal walking stick.

"Greg" simply presents a confident smile.

Bespectacled "Reggie," wearing an NC ball cap and a fur-collar jacket, partially obscures his face in a cloud of exhaled smoke from the cigarette clamped in his lips.

"Chris" turns the back and left side of his head to the camera so that his face remains unseen.

"Jeffrey S." meets your gaze with a look that says, "That's right, I'm missing one of my arms. Ask me how it happened and I'll tell you."

Some of the men look happy, while others look worried, apprehensive and/or cold.



**Individual identity** is just one of the issues that Kirouac raises. It's also about community engagement, the relationship between self-esteem, gainful employment and the decline of the print medium in an increasingly digital age.

Kirouac has augmented her photographs with a single color photograph and a sculpture. The color photo, which she made at the Journal loading dock, shows the back of a truck with unsold newspapers for recycling. It's displayed near the centrally placed sculpture, a waist-high stack of copies of the Journal, which also serves as a pedestal. It supports a stack of loose, individual newsprint copies of one of Kirouac's "Papermen" portraits. Visitors are invited to take a copy for free.

Kirouac is a Canadian artist who has lived in Winston-Salem since 2008. Her project was supported in part by a \$2,000 regional artist project grant from the Arts Council of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County.

To broaden the audience, Kirouac raised additional funds for one of the photos to appear as two full pages in the A section of today's Journal. Although it's a paid advertisement, Kirouac considers it an art print that she is offering to readers.