

# The Boston Globe



Bremner Benedict's photograph "Alewife, Cambridge, MA." (Gallery Kayafas)

GALLERIES

## Compelling the eyes of the beholder

By Cate McQuaid, Globe Correspondent | July 16, 2008

### Power source

Photographer Bremner Benedict, too, pulls attention to something many people consciously ignore: electrical towers. We avert our eyes from them, perhaps because we find them ugly, or because they often appear in the middle of otherwise natural landscapes.

Benedict puts us face to face with them; each of her color photographs frames only a portion of a greater network of wires and towers, planting us amidst them, so close in it's hard to determine their scale. She also appears to play, now and then, with double exposure, although it's hard to say for sure (and she hasn't).

Look at "Saint Catherines, Canada," in which a blur of chain link fence seems to merge with startlingly clear towers and wires, gleaming against the sun under a brilliant sky. Is the fence in front of the structures, or behind? Its scale suggests the former, but Benedict foils any such assumptions, as the towers seem to rise to the image's surface.

"Alewife, Cambridge, MA" is more direct, an unflinching examination of what looks like a crown of giant coils, each attached to three long, looping cables that reach out to more metal coils. The thing has a toy-like allure, but this is likely much bigger than anything you'd make with your Erector Set; to the eyes of someone who knows nothing of electrical engineering, like me, the image reeks of power and menace.

These photographs have seemingly little connection to images Benedict had in the 2002 DeCordova Annual. Those were shot with a toy camera in black-and-white, and featured mysterious figures wielding mirrors. They do share a fascination with currents of power. The earlier, dreamlike images mined the unconscious, and the power of the unknown; these take a more direct approach, looking at the beauty and ugliness of the machines that generate and conduct power. These, I think, are sparer, and they're better.