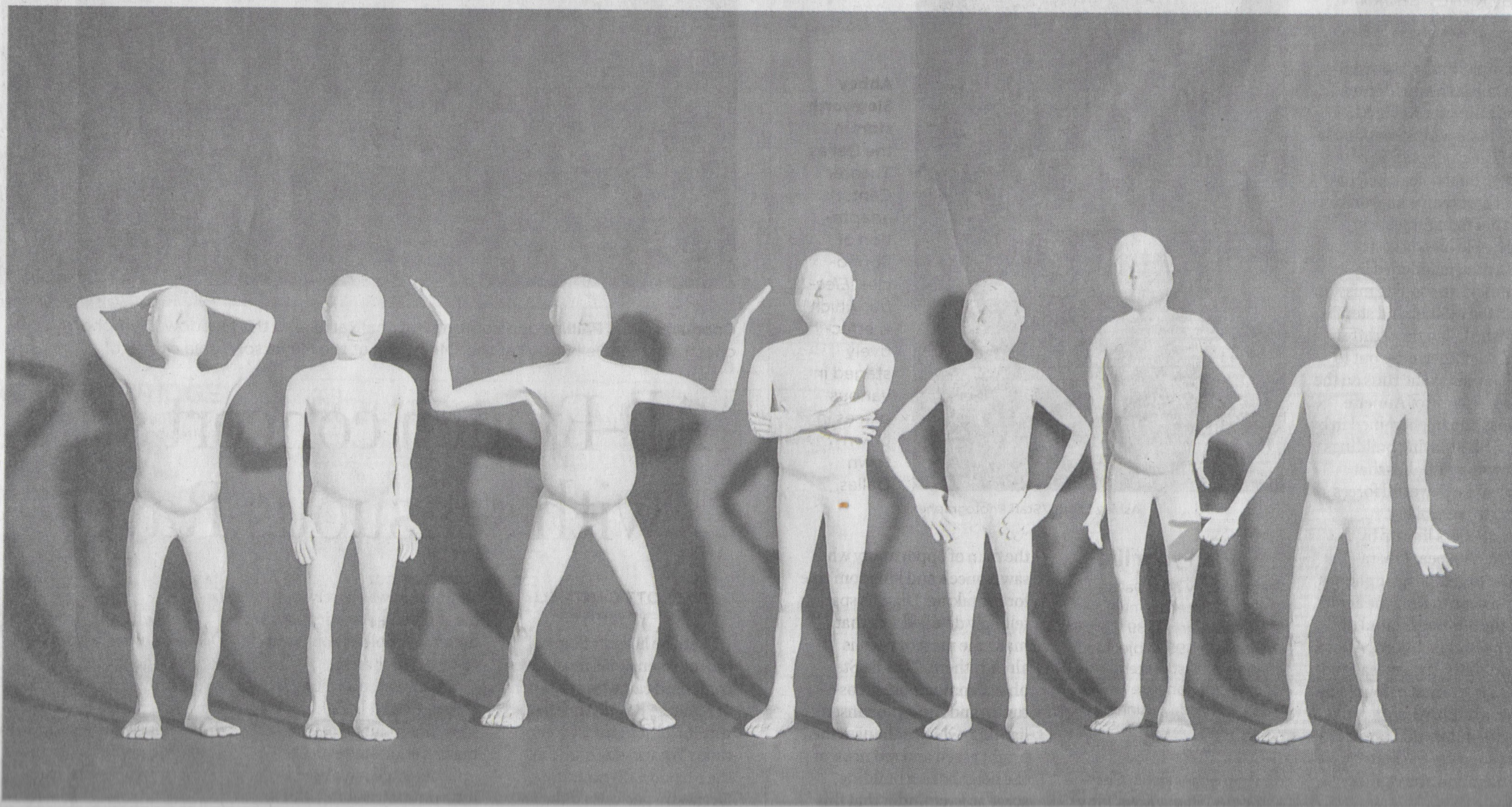


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ART REVIEW



Photos by Nan Coulter/Special Contributor

7 *whys/whynots*, 2016 by Nic Nicosia is included in the show "At Home on Time," which continues through May 6 at Erin Cluley Gallery in Dallas.

Timely works really add up

Artist's expansive body of work is no paint-by-numbers affair

By DANIELLE AVRAM
 Special Contributor

Nic Nicosia has a thing for numbers. An artist with a career spanning five decades, Dallas native Nicosia has long had a habit of incorporating numbers into his work, whether as titles, repetitive marks or personal points of reference.

Many of his most famous photographic series, such as *Domestic Dramas* (1982), *Near (modern) Disasters* (1983) and *Real Pictures* (1987-89), feature images titled by the series name followed by an individual number — a deliberately ambiguous coding that leaves the content open for interpretation — while his drawings are accumulations of gestures repeated over time, visual quantifications of both personal and shared experiences.

Nicosia's latest show, "At Home on Time," at Erin Cluley Gallery, brings together an assortment of photographs, sculptures and drawings that center on the idea of time, particularly as a rumination on its passage.

Like a filmstrip, individual occurrences or events act as one part of a whole, brought together to form a singular narrative that is a



Nicosia's show gathers an assortment of photographs, sculptures and drawings centering on the idea of time.

Film serves as eerie Dallas time capsule

By CHRISTOPHER WYNN
 Arts & Culture Editor
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There's a leafy residential street in North Dallas named Middleton, situated just off Midway Road, north of Walnut Hill Lane. Artist Nic Nicosia changed the name to the more prosaic *Middletown* for his short film shot on location there in 1997.

Nicosia, an acclaimed artist and photographer whose work is in the permanent collections of the Guggenheim, the Whitney and the Dallas Museum of Art, has a new exhibit at Erin Cluley Gallery, and its theme of passing time led us to reconsider *Middletown*.

The 15-minute black-and-white film consists of Nicosia with a rigged camera shooting out the windshield of his SUV. He slowly loops the neighborhood, which is laid out in a rough circle-eight formation.

A series of seemingly random events — an overheating van, twin cowboy salesmen, a man teetering on stilts, a boy on his bicycle dragging a body with a rope (a black spray-painted blow-up doll) — were carefully



Livingroom #4 with 8 house jam, onmymind, untitled #5, 2016 by Nic Nicosia

Photos by Nan Coulter/Special Contributor

Blurring the lines of reality

Continued from Page 1E

reflection of the artist.

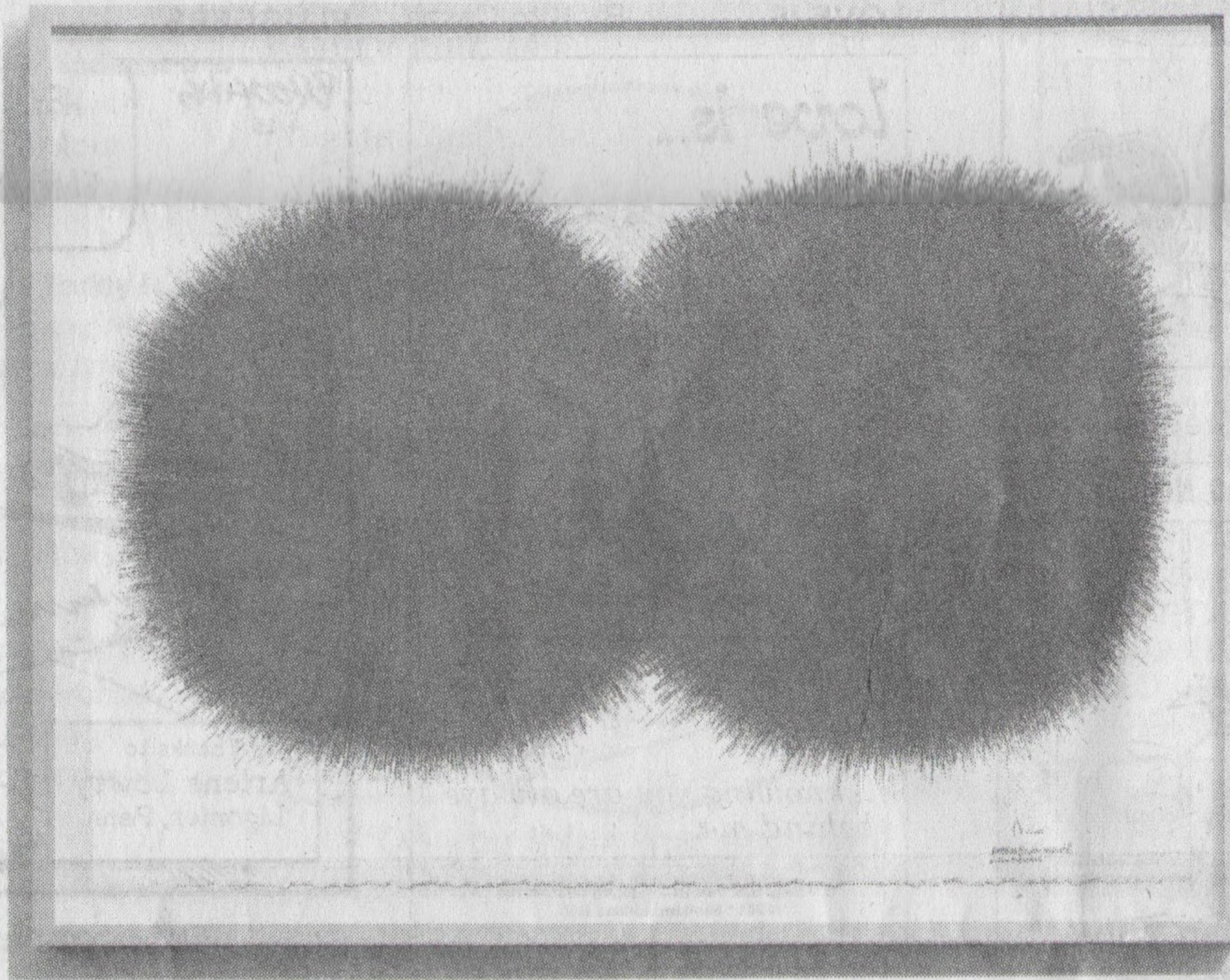
It's a fitting metaphor to describe Nicosia's expansive body of work, given that he originally trained as a filmmaker. A graduate of the radio-television-film program at the University of North Texas, Nicosia began working in photography after opening a camera shop in Denton in the late 1970s.

He jumped into the medium at a pivotal point in its development: the rise of the Pictures Generation (a group of photographers unafraid to appropriate images from popular culture and media) and a shift toward more studio-based and photograph-as-construct practices.

With a firming grip in the fine arts at that point, photography was less concerned with drawing the lines between art, commercial and documentary practices, instead leaning into the confusion, underscoring the capacity for the medium to simultaneously exist in all worlds.

Furthering this idea was a new generation of photographers born and raised in suburban post-World War II America, for whom television and movies weren't novelties, but rather cultural touchstones.

While the Pictures Generation was concerned with the twisting of information accumulation, appropriation and dissemination, other photographers were focusing inward, using visual cues derived from television and film to construct personal narratives



AM/PM
(86,400
seconds),
2017 by
Nicosia

Plan your life

"Nic Nicosia: At Home On Time," through May 6 at Erin Cluley Gallery, 414 Fabrication St., erincluley.com.

reflective of the time.

Along with contemporaries such as Jeff Wall and Sandy Skoglund, Nicosia produces work that hovers somewhere between fiction and reality: staged scenes shot against backdrops, that — while occasionally bordering on the fantastical — capture real-world struggles and emotions.

Along with numbers, interiors are a recurring theme in Nicosia's projects, and make up the bulk of "At Home on Time." After living in Santa Fe for 11 years (4,108 days, according to Nicosia) he returned to Dallas and embarked on photographing the homes of collectors who had

previously purchased his pieces.

He captured the works *in situ*, but added doses of his signature surreality, including small sculptures he made — creatures dubbed *dreamboats*, humanoid figures, Cubist-esque faces and ravens (an homage to the birds he spied daily in Santa Fe) — placed in the scenes, often interacting with existing objects.

Household pets pop up in many of the images, lending a charismatic, off-the-cuff-ness that belies his polished, film noir play of light and shadow. The resulting photographs are encased in red frames, the overall effect charming and playful, indicative of an artist who is comfortable in his own skin.

Several of these sculptures are included in the show, appearing alongside their

photographic counterparts, goofy little creatures that reference Nicosia's need to make "things."

But most striking are the drawings, a practice that forms the basis of all of the artist's work. They hearken back to his fascination with numbers, encapsulations of the manner in which we (consciously and subconsciously) measure ourselves: the number of homes occupied, breaths taken, birds spotted, years lived, seconds passed.

They are a reminder of life, and whether we like it or not, it's there, passing with each click of the shutter, each mark on the page. For Nicosia, being alive is what matters most.

Danielle Avram is a curator and writer based in Dallas.



Nic Nicosia

The 15-minute film *Middletown* by artist Nic Nicosia shows his North Dallas neighborhood in 1977 and examines the banality of suburban life and norms.

Film captures Dallas circa 1977

Continued from Page 1E

staged and timed.

Nicosia's cast consisted of friends, family and neighbors (he lived in the area at the time). "We had 30 characters in it, and it was filmed in July and it was like 104 degrees," recalls Nicosia.

The "woman with dog" was played by neighbor and *Dallas Morning News* arts contributor Nan Coulter and her springer spaniel Barney.

Nicosia painted Xs on the street and used walkie-talkies to communicate. He says they lost the first version of the film because of a glitch

with the new camera; it had to be reshot. "The version you see now is actually the second take."

Nicosia won't comment on what the film is supposed to mean. But its languid pace and circuslike music add a surreal quality. The piece seems to be both nostalgic and suspicious in its portrayal of the suburban middle class (though homes in this neighborhood today can top \$1 million).

This is both literally and figuratively Nicosia's world. It's his American dream state.

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