Exhibit focuses on memories of Rome

CU professor offers view of Eternal City

By Monyatsi Gaseitsiwe

Dr. Roger Aikin, associate professor of Fine Arts, attempted to capture the multi-layered beauty of a place that has fascinated him for years.

"Images of Rome," an exhibit featuring Aikin's photos of the city is on display through Nov. 19 in the Lied Center Art Gallery. The exhibit opened Oct 7.

The photos were taken during Aikin's sabbatical leave.

Through writing a doctoral dissertation on late Renaissance in Rome, Aikin said he became knowledgeable about the city and its great wonders. That added to his interest in photographing Rome.

"I want the pictures to suggest an altogether different context-history, nostalgia, irony or commentary on human condition," he said.

After photographing national parks of the United States, his endeavors took him to Rome, where he began working on this particular exhibit in 1998.

He realized that the very streets evoked layers of significant memories.

"The ancient city is indeed about 30 feet down everywhere you walk," he said.

Aikin said that these pictures convey the romantic, historic and sentimental feelings of Rome.

Earlier Aikin focused his study of photography in Oregon and California. There he absorbed the West Coast aesthetic's use of large-format cameras practiced by Ansel Adams and Brett Weston with whom he worked.

Aikin said he likes using the large format because it takes bigger negatives because of the larger lenses on the camera. This results in photos with incredible detail.

He prefers to use an 11x14-inch view camera.

Unfortunately, such a camera is so big that he couldn't use it without the assistance of two or three strong men.

Since he was on his own in Rome, he had to make do with a 4x5-inch view camera that was exceptionally sharp.

Aikin said that sometimes the photography was exhausting when he was forced to battle the crowded buses around the city while carrying his equipment.

Aikin visited such places as Aventine Hill, Villa Aurelia and the Roman Forum to gather the many images.

He returned to Creighton with 200 negatives.

He said 80 of them were what he would call "good." He narrowed that down to the 59 photos in the exhibit.

Jean Ortiz contributed to this story.

Photo by Roger Aikin

The gate at Villa Aurelia is one of the 59 images included in Roger Aikin's photo exhibit "Images of Rome." The Lied Center Art Gallery exhibit runs through Nov. 19.