

World traveler appreciates the role of women in far-flung lands

Photos depict daily life in villages around the globe

STUART LOW • STAFF WRITER • MARCH 1, 2009

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Jamie Columbus describes herself as a modern gypsy — and her new photo exhibit at Rochester Contemporary Art Center surely bears that out.

The display portrays women in many of the 42 countries that the [Brighton](#) resident visited in the past two decades. Her shots capture villagers working in fields, dancing in the street or just catching a second wind. The exhibit is designed as a tribute to International Women's Day, a global celebration for the economic, political and social gains of women (for more, go to www.internationalwomensday.com).

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Unlike many Women's History Month events that highlight struggle, this exhibit's tribal heroines collectively exude an aura of quiet fulfillment. "It's more about the inner beauty of their lives," says Columbus, 46, an associate with her mother Judy Columbus' broker network. "I'm paying tribute to the women I came to appreciate in my [travels](#)."

Whether in Kenya, Ecuador or Tibet, she records their unposed daily routines. An enthusiastic backpacker, she stays in villagers' homes and uses local interpreters to communicate.

Her show in the compact LAB Space creates a cocoonlike atmosphere with floor cushions, pillows and a Moroccan carpet. The bright fabrics mirror the exotic attire in the wall-to-wall photos

surrounding the viewer. A young Indian woman, for instance, wears a green dress that looks plucked from a peacock. Elsewhere, a beaming Thai woman perches on a wooden stoop, giant metal beads dangling from her [hat](#).

No labels or wall texts accompany the images, though a nearby book contains background information and poetic commentary by Brooklyn writer Manoshi Chitra Neogy.

Visiting her exhibit recently, Columbus made a welcome discovery.

"Men were hanging out there, too," she says. "And it looked like they felt comfortable."



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Gujarati Tribal Life, India, is one of the photos depicting women in daily life. (Provided by Jamie Columbus)

IF YOU GO

What: "Earth Tones Woman," Jamie Columbus' photos of tribal women from around the world.

Where: LAB Space, Rochester Contemporary Art Center, 137 East Ave.

When: Through March 15.

Admission: \$1.

Special event: Celebration of Rochester International Women's Day, 1 to 3:30 p.m. next Sunday. Live music, dance and poetry readings, refreshments and presentations by civic officials. Free.

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