

Atlanta photographic exhibition

# illuminating blindness

**If there's one thing that an observer may take away from the visually stunning photographic exhibit *Blind/Sight*, it's that blindness is not universal. Everyone's experience is different.**

"Blindness is not always darkness and darkness is not always lack of vision," says Billy Howard, an award-winning photographer based in Atlanta. In the exhibition of his beautiful photography, *Blind/Sight*, you learn that not every blind person "sees" the same thing. Many assume that those who are so afflicted merely see a constant black. Not so.

The 12 blind people so well described and photographed in his portraits are remarkably different. A variety of ages, diseases, accidents, and ultimate outcomes defines each person as a separate and unique story.

Those who are blind from birth often do not "see" anything. Those who lost sight later have various images in either their brain or in their remaining field of vision. Howard's partner in the visually compelling exhibition is Laurie Shock, who has the daunting job of rendering, as close as is possible, what the blind person "sees." Howard's photo-




graph and Shock's image are hung side by side with enough personal information in text that you feel you know these folks. An accompanying audio guide provides even more depth.

A 30-something policeman, catastrophically injured on the job, "sees" disjointed human body parts that seem to move across a screen. Shock artistically renders that somewhat disturbing image with gripping realism. And an elderly lady with macular degeneration, left with very minimal and distorted sight, sees perfect butterflies and flowers in her field of vision. So like the lady herself, remarked Howard.

Howard's insight makes this event a not-to-be-missed experience for those who care about vision and its impact on our humanity. "What does it mean to be blind, to have a visual impairment, not to see?" says Howard. "I thought it was about darkness. It is not. It is about light, energy and the boundless creativity of the human mind to discover the world using all senses.

"Each of us has a unique view of the world around us. The people documented here know that," he continues. "They have discovered their own ways of seeing and ask only that you join their conversation.

"We all have different ways of seeing; the important thing, is that we listen." 

*Blind/Sight* is on permanent view at the Center for the Visually Impaired in downtown Atlanta. [WEB LINK] Go to: [www.cviga.org/BlindSight.shtml](http://www.cviga.org/BlindSight.shtml)