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PLAYBACK: WOMEN, EVENTS AND NEWS YOU MIGHT HAVE MISSED

In Pilsen, intimate inspiration

By Alison Neumer
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Advertisement

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Philadelphia-born artist Rebecca Villarreal captures quiet daily moments in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood in her first photography exhibit, "Intimate on 18th Street," a collection of 22 black and white images that opened Friday in the neighborhood's Cafe Jumping Bean.

Villarreal, who also is a published poet, photographed a nearby barber shop and the men who wield scissors there, a ballet class for young girls taught out of a neighbor's spare room, and a sewing machine store packed with old models.

"I'd like to see more people embrace the small joys of life," Villarreal said, pointing to the subtle details and emotions in her photos that eventually emerge for the patient viewer. "New Ballerina" is a straight-on portrait of a small girl in a ballet skirt and shoes whose face is bright with pleasure and concentration.

Last year Villarreal, 36, moved to Pilsen from Washington, D.C., where she had lived starting in college. She was inspired by her new surroundings, she said.

"It's like a muse falling down on you," she said. "It needs to be shared, and that's why I make art."

"Intimate on 18th Street" runs through July 21 at the cafe, 1439 W. 18th St.

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