



Detail from "Unknown Flower Cross," by Richard Gilles from *The Highway Remembers* at the Axis Gallery. Exhibition is open noon to 5 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays from May 3 to June 1. The opening reception is on Saturday, May 10, from 6 to 9 p.m. Visit www.axisgallery.org or call (916) 443-9900 for more information.

Go ahead, stop and stare

No doubt, you've driven past a memorial site alongside a stretch of road where just off the edge of the asphalt was an unassuming arrangement of wilting flowers, cards, candles and small gifts. There was likely a makeshift grave marker, a burned out candle or a scribbled note, an old favorite CD case or a friendship bracelet. The neatly displayed items might have just caught your vision as you rumbled past along to your destination.

When you're driving at 60 miles per hour, it's hard to get a close look at such a complex display—and harder yet to comprehend the magnitude of the statement: Someone died there. Friends, family and strangers from the community have gone to the scene of an accident and placed gifts and memories for the deceased.

It's a dynamic image, yeah, but it's not the artist's statement to make, according to photographer Richard Gilles. His collection *The Highway Remembers* allows viewers to ponder these scenes of tranquil remembrance through a series of panoramas without pushing an agenda. The scenes in themselves hold a certain statement, but Gilles refuses to assert one himself; it's up to you, the viewer, he says, to determine the weight of the imagery the artist offers.

From the success of his nationally recognized *Power Plant* series of photographs, which combined images of old industry with younger graffiti art, to the later *Almost Home-Less: A Photographic Exploration*—a panoramic display of the disparate living situations of America—Gilles presents fascinating photographs that raise numerous questions. In this case: Who is the deceased? Who left the flowers? When did this happen? Or, as Gilles himself asks: "What is the intended effect on the casual driver passing by?"

The answers, of course, are yours to decide.

—Josh Fernandez