

Ehrenwald treats photography as 'painting with light'

BY CLARKE BUSTARD
TIMES-DISPATCH STAFF WRITER

Elena Ehrenwald dreams through the lens of a camera. Her photographs, part of the "Latin Ambiance" show at The Gallery Art & Design, filter landscapes and seascapes of Ehrenwald's native Mexico through what she calls "a dream state of mind."

Some of the dreamy quality comes from her subject matter: semitropical forests shrouded in fog, a flying fish over a lagoon, a ramshackle graveyard with ornate stone caskets resting aboveground.

Ehrenwald accentuates the otherworldliness by printing techniques that overlay "ghosts" — blurred presences, sometimes seeming to move, other times seemingly quivering in place — on her pictures.

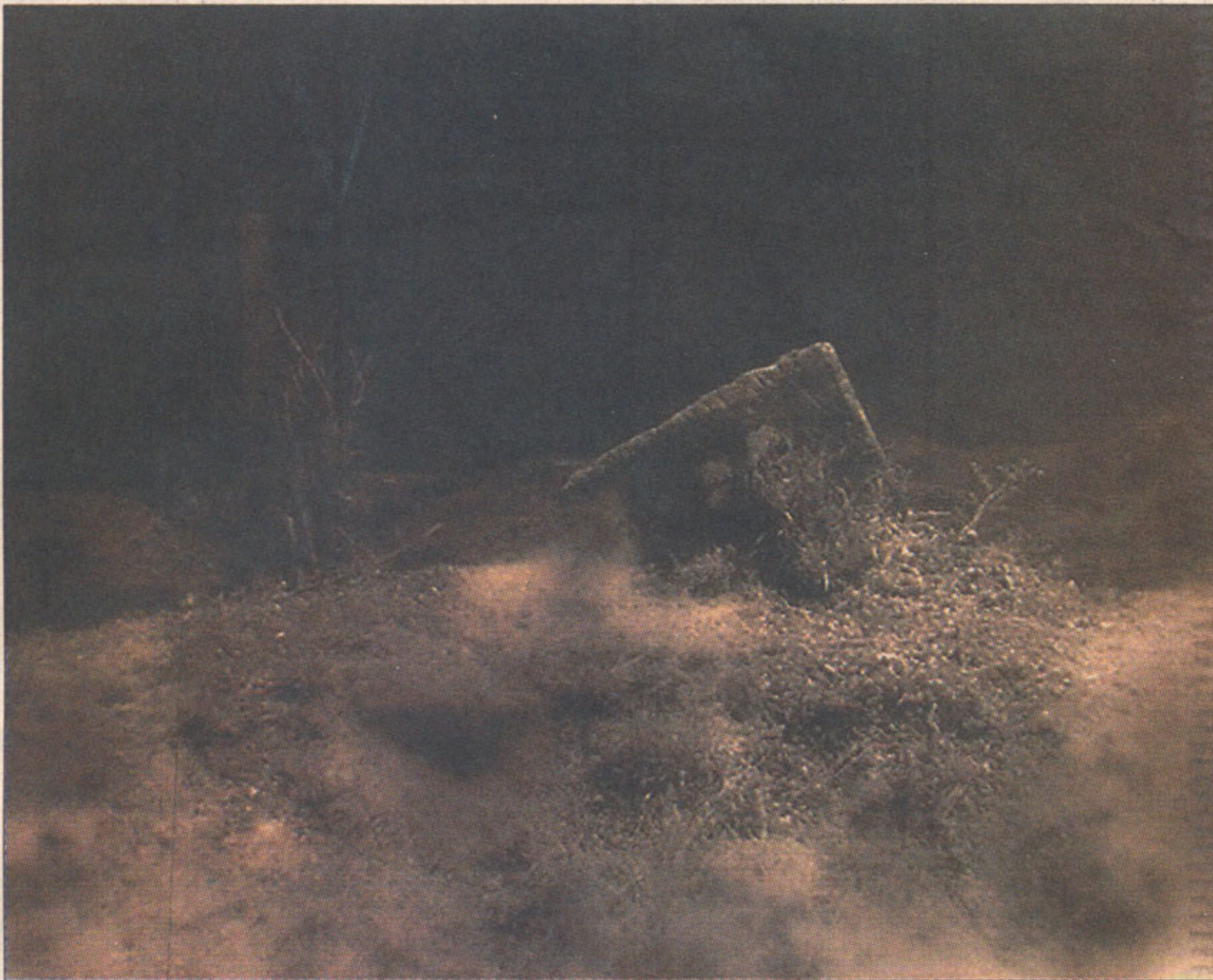
Treating photography as "painting with light," Ehrenwald produces infrared sepia-tone prints in editions of five to 10. "Each is different in tone," she said last weekend during a visit to Richmond for the opening of the show. "The differences come about by chance."

She is showing 17 photographs in "Latin Ambiance," alongside nine by Viviana Peretti and 12 by Lissette Solorzano.

Ehrenwald, born and reared in Mexico City, was artistically inclined from the start. "Since I can remember, I have done painting, sculpture, something creative," she recalled.

The 46-year-old photographer, who has lived in Miami for

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Elena Ehrenwald's "Xuchilquitongo I" is hand-tinted sepia on paper.

Photos

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the past five years, describes herself as self-taught in the medium. "I learned and I still work by trial and error," she said.

The hits now seem to outnumber the errors. She won the 2003 photography prize in the Florence Biennale, a prestigious Italian show.

IF YOU GO

WHAT: "Latin Ambiance"
WHERE: The Gallery Art & Design, 16 S. Dooley Ave.
WHEN: Through March 19
INFORMATION: (804) 355-0102

Ehrenwald studied graphic design at the Universidad Ibero Americana in Mexico City. "I fell in love with the darkroom then, but I went on to

work as a designer for some years until I stopped to have children."

When she resumed her artistic career, determined to focus on photography, she found "everything was digital. I hated it, probably because I didn't understand the technology and didn't know what to do. Instead of learning, I ran away," to the old, familiar techniques of shooting on film and printing on paper.

"It's not easy," she said of using techniques and materials that are increasingly antique. "I've had to



JOE MAHONEY/TIMES-DISPATCH

Elena Ehrenwald's photographs are part of the "Latin Ambiance" show at The Gallery Art & Design.

buy quantities of the paper I like to use because some the factories have stopped making it. I may have to buy a freezer to store it."

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