

# PHOTOVISION

ART & TECHNIQUE

## PORTFOLIOS

JOHN SEXTON  
STEPHEN PETERSON  
LES MCLEAN

JOHN SEXTON:  
IN-DEPTH

## DARKROOM

PROCESSING  
LARGE NEGATIVES

## WHY PEOPLE MAKE PHOTOS

ROBERT HIRSCH

## TRAVEL

FALL COLOR IN  
NEW ENGLAND



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## PHOTOVISION

ART &amp; TECHNIQUE

VOL. 1, NO. 2 • SEPT/OCT 2000



COVER PHOTO © 2000 JOHN SEXTON.  
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This month's cover, "Atlantis Suspended, Vehicle Assembly Building, Kennedy Space Center, Florida" by photographer John Sexton, is one image from his upcoming book *Places of Power: The Aesthetics of Technology*. The photograph was made in the Vehicle Assembly Building (VAB) at NASA's Kennedy Space Center.

The dim illumination within the VAB necessitated an exposure of three minutes at  $f/22$  on Kodak T-MAX 400 4x5" film. Though the overall lighting level was low, the contrast of the scene was high, necessitating a "compensating" development procedure. The film was given extreme minus development in a highly-dilute T-MAX RS developer with reduced agitation. The image was made with a 300mm Nikkor-M lens on a 4x5" Linhof Technikardan 45S view camera.

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## FROM THE EDITOR

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The avowed mission of *Photovision* is to provide a forum for traditional forms of photography. This includes silver-gelatin, platinum/palladium, gum, carbon, albumen, etc. It does not include digital imaging.

However, the editors are aware that some (though certainly not all) of the world's finest alternative printers working in platinum/palladium, gum, carbon, albumen, etc. are now using digital processes to enlarge their negatives. We do not find this intermediary step to be inconsistent with the purpose of *Photovision*. What we wish to avoid are actual digital images — fish flying over New York, fish flying over Los Angeles, fish flying over fish — in other words, images created primarily on the computer.

As long as the original negative or transparency was made by traditional methods, and the finished work is a traditional print, it is not important to us if the enlarged negative is made digitally. We will proudly publish portfolios by alternative printers who use enlarged digital negatives.

We approached our premiere issue with some trepidation. Many people in and out of the photographic community had expressed skepticism about the viability of a magazine devoted entirely to traditional, or wet process photography. Even other magazine editors called to say that we couldn't make it work without digital. Well, I am pleased to report that after one issue it is already working. Word of our commitment to the art and science of pure photography is spreading among photographers and we are pleased to report that, based on the response from our first outing, photography is alive and well and doing fine without computers.

We have received a plethora of letters, emails and subscriptions from readers who expressed a common theme: show us the silver (and gum, and platinum, etc.)! That's exactly what we will continue to do. In the coming months you will see more fine black-and-white, color and alternative process work by photographers who share your love of the medium.

In this issue we are very pleased to present the work of one of the best known black-and-white photographers currently working. John Sexton represents and extends the best of the West Coast tradition in photography. His large format have been featured in two previous books — *Quite Light* and *Listen to the Trees* — and in this issue we present an exclusive interview with the artist and a selection of photos from his newest book, *Places of Power*.

Sexton's traditional approach has been applied to a somewhat different range of subjects in this book. Although he includes images of Anasazi ruins, the main focus of the book is on the beauty of man's dramatic and powerful creations. Power plants, hydroelectric dams and the space shuttle are composed and presented in ways that pay tribute to their form and function and offer us insight into man's place in the world.

The trees, rivers and fields of Sexton's earlier books give way to structural metal, concrete and the surprisingly soft but protective tiles that enclose the space shuttle. Watch for *Places of Power* at a bookstore near you. As always, we love hearing what you think of the work and will pass along your comments to the artist.

Thomas Harrop  
Editorial Director

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# SIGMA



## O U R

Expressing the sense of awesome speed as a giant bird takes to the air  
— Charles de Gaulle Airport, Paris.

Katsu Aoki: Born 1944, Saitama, Japan. Graduated from Tokyo Photography School. Became a freelance photographer specializing in travel and aircraft, while working in advertising and public relations, following a period of newspaper sports photography. Has published numerous photographic books and software titles.

Photo data: Sigma APO 50-500mm f/4-6.3 EX RF HSM; exposed for 1/500 sec. at f/8.

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# READER'S FORUM

## A Welcome Surprise

Delighted to see *Photovision* in my mail this afternoon. And, I agree with your editorial decision to stay strictly chemical. I am glad you are doing that. Thanks again. I look forward to many more issues.

— Ward Wallingford

## Traditional, Not Old-Fashioned

What a wonderful amazing surprise to receive the inaugural edition of your magazine! I cannot thank you enough in a world becoming more abstracted from the vitality of a hands-on experience of life and craft (leading to greater alienation). Your service of such a magazine is nourishment, indeed.

I was beginning to feel old-fashioned with so many around me upbraiding one for not “going digital.” To me, digital imagery is not *photography* anymore. I could never give up witnessing

the *magic* of seeing the image come up in the developer. It is *still* magic after 35 years. With much gratitude,

— John Loewenstein

## Heading to the Darkroom

I just received a copy of *Photovision* and wanted to send a quick thank you! I've been really excited about black-and-white fine art photography since the [Calumet Institute] class at Salisbury and am getting ready to make some prints tonight! Look forward to future copies of the magazine — good luck with the endeavor.

— Kevin Frew, Salisbury, MA

## Continuing Wonders

Will wonders never cease? I had forgotten about *PhotoWork*. Thanks to all at your end for the courtesy. It is appreciated and if the other issues are as well done as the premier one, I'll be

a regular subscriber.

As a traditionalist in the art and craft of black-and-white photography, I am pleased your publication will let others deal with such matters as digital imaging. Mixing the two may not work well, as letters to the editor's of surviving photographic magazines will attest. I wish you success in this new publication.

— Tom Tracy, Omaha NE

## A Nice Surprise

There I was, sitting at the computer firing off a message to a friend on the other coast, when I hear the mail carrier stomp up on the porch and deposit the mail through the slot. A loud thud catches my attention and I think “Oh no, another clothing catalogue for my teenage daughter!” But on further inspection I find this nice surprise — *Photovision* — a new magazine devoted to the art of traditional photography. Great! Looking forward to reading your new magazine.

—Eugene Laford, Springfield, MA

## C<sub>7</sub>H<sub>6</sub>O<sub>5</sub> Not C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>6</sub>O<sub>3</sub>!

Nice magazine — it's really nice. Well designed and laid out with great photos. Keep up the good work.

There is a mistake on page 10, 3rd paragraph down: “Gallic acid, known as pyrogallic acid, pyrogallol, and more commonly as pyro...”

This is in error and could cause some grief. Gallic acid is C<sub>7</sub>H<sub>6</sub>O<sub>5</sub>, pyro is C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>6</sub>O<sub>3</sub>. Pyro is made by evenly heating gallic acid in an oven to drive off a CO<sub>2</sub> molecule thus converting it to the pyrogallic acid. Pyro means heat by the way. Gallic acid costs about one third of that of pyrogallic acid and I am afraid many will buy the wrong compound. This obviously was an editing error. Oops! If I can be of any assistance to you in the future please ask. Cheers and good luck.

— Dick Sullivan, Bostick & Sullivan

*It has been brought to my attention continued on page 62*

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## IN MY OPINION



© Robert Hirsch. Untitled (detail), 1999. From the series *The Architecture of Landscape*. 20 x 16 inches. Toned gelatin silver print.

# Why People Make Photographs

## PART II

*This is the second installment that contemplates the nature of why we make and look at photographs and how we derive meaning from them.*

### 7. What makes a photograph interesting?

A significant ingredient that makes a photograph interesting is empathy for it gives viewers an initial path for cognitive and emotional comprehension of the subject. Yet the value of a photograph is not limited to its depiction of people, places, things, and feelings akin to those in our life. An engaging image contains within it the capacity to sensitize and stimulate our latent exploratory senses. Such a photograph asserts ideas and

### ROBERT HIRSCH

This series, “The Architecture of Landscape,” concentrates on the marks of human civilization — labor, leisure, and production — as forces that transform nature. They depict the multiple of ways in which people attempt to control nature and demonstrate that fabricating of landscapes, like the making of landscape images, is an essential human desire.

perceptions that we recognize as our own but could not have given concrete form to without having first seen that image.

### 8. How is meaning of a photograph determined?

Meaning is not intrinsic. Meaning is established through a fluid cognitive and emotional relationship among the maker, the photograph, and the viewer. The structure of a photograph can communicate before it is understood. A good image teaches one how to read it by provoking responses from the viewers’ inventory of life experiences as meaning is not always found in things, but sometimes between them. An exceptional

photograph creates viewer focus that produces attention, which can lead to definition. As one mediates on what is possible, multiple meanings may begin to present themselves.

### 9. Are the issues surrounding truth and beauty still relevant to photographers of the 21st century?

During the past twenty-five years issues of gender, identity, race, and sexuality have been predominant because they had been previously neglected. In terms of practice, the artistic ramifications of digital imaging have been a overriding concern. But whether an imagemaker uses analog silver-based methods to record reality or pixels to transform it, the two greatest issues that have concerned imagemakers for thousands of years — truth and beauty — have been conspicuously absent from the discussion. In the postmodern era irony has been the major form of artistic expression.

Although elusive, there are certain patterns that can be observed that define a personal truth. When we recognize an individual truth it may grab hold and bring us to a complete stop - a total mental and physical halt from what we were doing, while simultaneously experiencing a sense of clarity and certainty that eliminates the need for future questioning.

Beauty is the satisfaction of knowing the imprimatur of this moment. Although truth and beauty are based in time and may exist only for an instant, photographers can capture a trace of this interaction for viewers to contemplate. Such photographs can authenticate the experience and allow us to reflect upon it and gain deeper meaning.

Beauty is not a myth, in the sense of just being a cultural construct or creation of manipulative advertisers, but a basic hardwired part of human nature. Our passionate pursuit of beauty has been observed for centuries. The history of ideas can be represented in terms of visual pleasure. In pre-Christian times Plato stated: "The three wishes of every man: to be healthy, to be rich by honest means, and to be beautiful." More recently American philosopher George

Santayana postulated that there must be "in our very nature a very radical and widespread tendency to observe beauty, and to value it."

### 10. How has digitalization affected photography?

Although *Photovision* is "dedicated to the pure craft of photography," digitalization has shifted the authority of the photograph from the subject to the photographers by allowing them to extend time and incorporate space and sound. Photography is no longer just about making illusionistic windows of the material world or collapsing events into single moments. The constraints on how a photograph should look have broken down, they no longer have to be two-dimensional objects that we look at on a wall. This elimination of former artificial barriers is also good for those who wish to practice the art and craft of photography because it encourages makers to open the doors of perception

to new ideas and methods for making photographs.

### 11. What are some of the advantages of digital imaging over silver-based imagemaking?

As in silver-based photography, digital imaging allows truth to be made up by whatever people deem to be important and whatever they choose to subvert. While analog silver-based photographers begin with "everything" and often rely on subtractive composition to accomplish these goals, digitalization permits artists to start with a blank slate. This allows imagemakers to convey the sensation and emotional weight of a subject without being bound by its physical conventions, giving picturemakers a new context and venues to express the content of their subject.

### 12. What are the disadvantages of digital imaging?

*continued on page 68*

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# A CONVERSATION WITH

# John Sexton

For over 27 years, John Sexton has devoted himself to the study and advancement of photography. While pursuing a course of study that placed him squarely on track for a career in commercial or industrial photography, Sexton had a life-changing experience.

In the early 1970s, he attended a session of the Ansel Adams Yosemite Workshops. During his studies, there he was exposed to people who were passionate about doing photography as a personal state-

INTERVIEW BY  
THOMAS HARROP

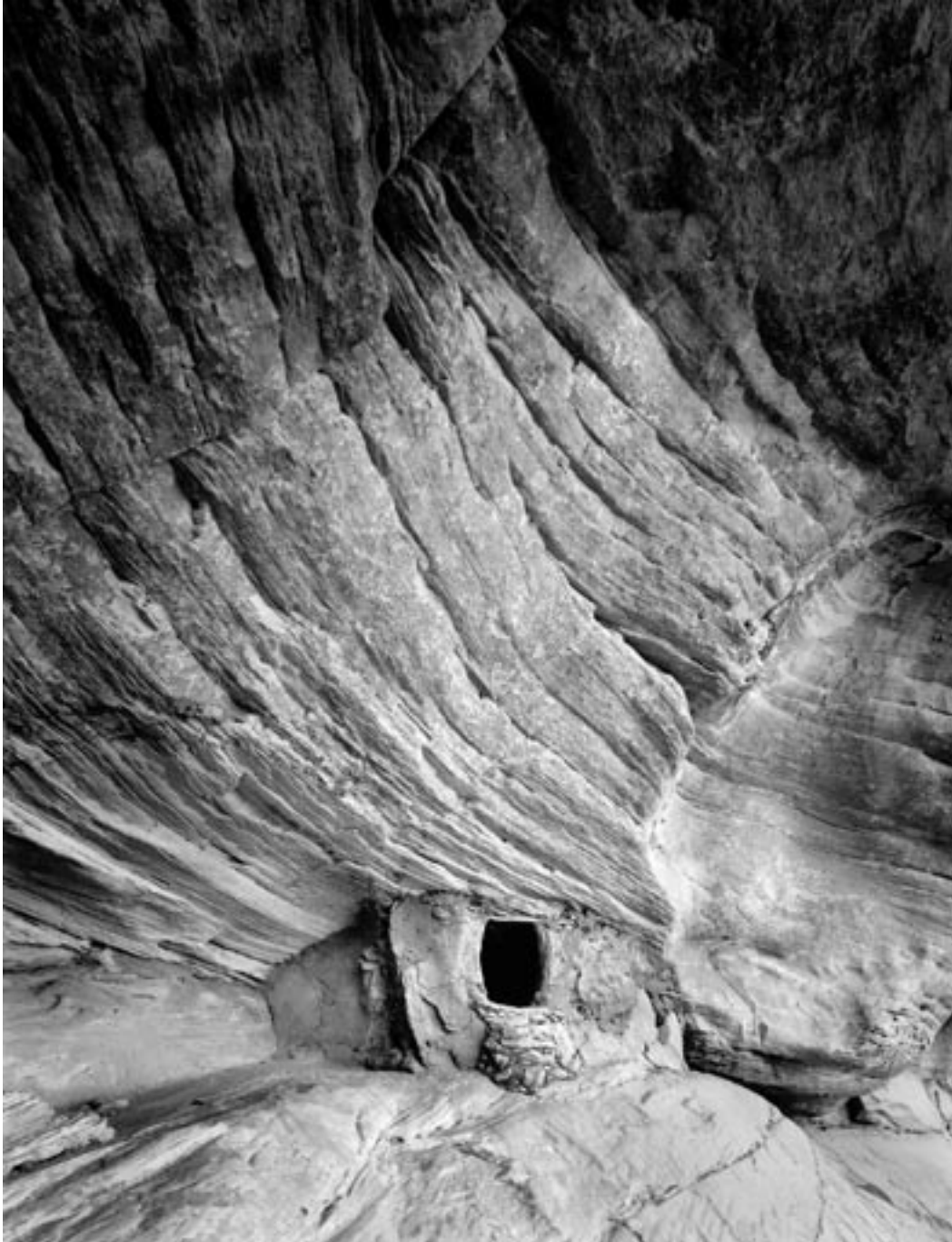
ment, not just as an assignment-based career.

In 1975, Sexton was invited back to the Ansel Adams Workshops as an assistant. Sexton's job was to clean the floors and work in other menial capacities. Still, he continued to be drawn to the energy and mastery of the dedicated photographers he found at the workshops.

Three years later, Sexton got the call that set him squarely on

the path that his life would follow. Ansel's assistant at the time, Alan Ross, was moved up to instructor for the workshops and this left open a position as Ansel's personal assistant during the workshops. A year later, when Ross left to work in San Francisco, Adams asked John to move up from Southern California to work with him full-time. As photographic and technical assistant to Adams, Sexton conducted the tests used for Adams' books *The Print* and *The Negative*.

For three and a half years, Sexton





## JOHN SEXTON

continued to work full-time as Ansel's assistant, and then, in 1982, he decided the time had come to pursue his own photography.

Since setting out on his own career, Sexton has proved himself in the area of fine-art large format photography. In addition to conducting a plethora of popular workshops each year, Sexton has produced several books of his own work.

His first two books, *Quiet Light* and *Listen to the Trees*, achieved great critical and popular success and his latest outing, *Places of Power: The Aesthetics of Technology*, promises to expand his reputation even further. Although some will see this new book as a departure, it is firmly rooted in the West Coast tradition of beautifully crafted black-and-white photography.

Recently, *Photovision* Editorial Director Thomas Harrop had the opportunity to speak with Sexton about his new book, the state of photography and a great many other things both photographic and philosophical.

**Thom Harrop:** *What keeps you excited about photography and interested in your work?*

**John Sexton:** Brett Weston used to say that photography is 90% sheer brutal drudgery and 10% inspiration. I tell my workshop students it's that 10% that keeps us coming back.

I see myself as a professional, and my definition of a professional is that you have to do a good job even on a bad day. You want your doctor to be professional [laughs]. You don't want to see their work suffer just because they're having problems with their family. I think it is the same thing with photography. There are some days I don't want to go in the darkroom to make a print to fulfill a commitment. I would much rather go in and play with a brand new negative, but I can't because I have to honor my commitments.

But on those occasions when I look at the ground glass, or turn on the white lights while anxiously holding a piece of film, or look at a

freshly squeegeed print, that's the excitement that keeps me going.

**TH:** *Where have you been photographing recently?*

**JS:** In May I was in the Southwest and, after a workshop, I spent ten days making the last of the pictures for the book, *Places of Power*. I made two during that trip that ended up

the creative juices begin to flow.

**TH:** *What inspires you most?*

**JS:** Well, for the last few years it has been ancient Anasazi sites in the Southwest. They are probably the most challenging subject and the one with which I have the worst batting average.

I look forward to going to Anderson Ranch where I have the luxury of teaching a two-week long workshop. That workshop also gives me the opportunity to have a weekend to play, and my idea of playing will be photographing. Then bringing the negatives home, souping the film and trying to find the time to make prints. Time, I think, is the biggest "enemy" of most people's lives.

**TH:** *Do you edit your own negatives, or do you have someone go through them with you when you get back?*

**JS:** My girlfriend, Anne Larsen, is an excellent photographer. We look at each other's work and comment on it objectively. Sometimes I have something I'm really excited about and she'll say, "Well, that's not really working." Generally she's right because she offers a greater level of objectivity. Once you're invested in the making of an image you lose objectivity.

I soup all my own film, and Anne and I help each other with contact sheets. It's fun to see that first step in getting the negative onto paper, to study the proofs and figure out which ones I want to do first.

Very often I have favorites. There will be two or three that felt like they were the most exciting and they're sometimes the biggest disappointments. And there are the ones where you say, "Oh, yes! I got it!" I put a loupe on those right away and make sure they're sharp. It's distressing when I botch-up somehow. Maybe there's a cable release hanging down in the middle of the picture.

in the book. Before that, I made four others in late March when I went to the Kennedy Space Center most recently.

Each time I get out to photograph it generally follows a period of idle time. If I'm teaching workshops and I go out and do a demo on the view camera or the Zone System, that kind of gets me back in to practice, but there's nothing like really getting out and photographing on a regular basis.

It usually takes a few days to get back into the swing of things. You know, you put the wrong lens on the camera, or you kick the tripod leg, or you forget to close the shutter and pull the dark slide; things that once you're in practice you would hardly ever do. It takes a few days to get the cobwebs out and really get to the point where you are functioning efficiently and



## JOHN SEXTON

**TH:** *What kind of equipment do you use? Anything other than 4x5?*

**JS:** For 99.9% of my work I use a 4x5 view camera. When I was first forced to use a 4x5 as a photography major in college I hated it! I thought it was a really inefficient format. It was very inconvenient and awkward, and I didn't like that upside-down and reversed image. I just wanted to get through the classes where I had to use it and go back to my Hasselblad.

Somewhere along the line I got used to it. Now it's the format I feel most comfortable with. I also have an 8x10 and a 5x7. I've owned 2¼ cameras and I like them for certain things. I also own a 35mm, but the last time it was off the copy stand was years ago.

The one exception to this has been some 2¼ work I have recently done at the Kennedy Space Center with the Hasselblad ArcBody. I have used it for landscapes as well, but it seems to be most productive for me in shuttle photography. I start a long exposure with my 4x5 and then, because I get to use much wider apertures with the Hasselblad, I can get two exposures off with the 2¼ while I'm making an 8 or 10 minute exposure with the 4x5. I use the 35mm and the 45mm lenses and at f/11, everything in the world is in focus! There are a couple of images of the Shuttle that would have been impossible with the 4x5 because of limited time or cramped space.

That being said, I just love my 4x5. It's the camera that feels the most comfortable to me. I've used the Linhof Technika for 20 years. I bought my first Linhof used for \$400 in 1980. I stripped it down and got rid of the rangefinder, which is just not a part of the way I use the camera. I was trying to get rid of weight and bulk.

Four or five years later I sold it to a friend, who still uses it, then I bought a new Linhof in Germany. I traded that one in about three years

ago and bought an updated model which I currently use.

When I'm in the landscape that's the camera I use, and when I'm doing industrial subjects, like the Space Shuttle, I use the Linhof Technikardan which is a folding monorail camera. It's really great with super wide angle lenses. The lensboards on the two cameras

are interchangeable which is very convenient.

**TH:** *Do you prefer any specific lenses or do you use whatever is appropriate?*

**JS:** Whatever is appropriate. Then if it doesn't turn out right I just say, well, I didn't have the right lens. [laughs] For seven years, from 1973 to 1980, I only owned one lens. That was, as I like to say, "the best decision I never made." There wasn't anything in the wallet to buy a second lens. That was a used 210mm Schneider Symmar lens and today that's the focal length I use most often.

In 1980, I bought a Nikkor 120mm, 210mm and 300mm. So I tripled my lens selection. If you look in the back of *Quiet Light* or *Listen to the Trees*, where pictures span a fair amount of time, you'll see the 210mm there a lot, and every once in a while a 90mm. That's a lens I borrowed as a student, and later as an instructor,

from school.

**TH:** *Was that a 90mm Super Angulon?*

**JS:** Yes. But today I use primarily Nikkor lenses, except for a 58mm Schneider, which is a superb lens, and a 450mm Fujinon which I've had since about 1983.

I now use a little tiny 200mm f/8 Nikkor which is a phenomenal lens. I can fold my Linhof with the lens in place, it's that small. I didn't use all the coverage the big 210mm had, and the extra ten millimeters of focal length is meaningless. You can't see the difference. I tested the Nikkor before I bought it because I thought maybe it's not as good as the larger 210s, but I went out and did side-by-side pictures, then made 16x20" prints. They looked great.

I must say though, that my Schneider 58mm is a super piece of glass. When I'm working on the Space Shuttle that's the lens I use quite often. Almost everything on the Space Shuttle requires a wide angle lens because I'm usually either very close to the orbiter or inside the orbiter — it's very, very cramped quarters. With the 58mm I am often backed up against a bulkhead or other obstacle.

Even with the Anasazi sites I often use wide lenses to exaggerate the scale of the objects which are pretty small. Industrial subjects are just made for wide lenses, especially when you are doing interiors.

**TH:** *What film and paper do you currently use?*

**JS:** For years I only used Tri-X. For the last 14 or 15 years, since a little before it was introduced (because I was one of the people who consulted with Kodak on T-MAX films) I've used T-MAX 100. Occasionally, in low light situations or in the case of a landscape when wind might cause camera movement, I use T-MAX 400. I'd say 70 to 80% of what I do is T-MAX





## JOHN SEXTON

100.

Some people have trouble controlling that film. Based on the good advice of the instructors I had at Cypress College, we were taught to process film very accurately and one of the classes we took was color film processing. We had to learn how to process color transparencies and negatives.

Twice during the semester each student had to process the whole film run for the class. So those people who weren't getting it as quickly as others got a lot of help from everybody to make damn sure they were "with it" when it was their turn to process.

I remember the importance of timing and temperature being impressed upon us. I said to myself, "Hey, if it matters for color, it probably matters for black-and-white." So I tried, in my home darkroom with the controls I had available, which weren't particularly sophisticated — ice cubes, hot water, and stuff like that — I tried to control my black-and-white.

When T-MAX came along and it was a process sensitive film, to me it wasn't really an issue because I had already, for several years, tried to keep my process under control. If it's eight minutes, I wasn't doing it 7:45 or 8:15. I mean, how hard is it to do it eight minutes?

For years (when I was manually processing) I always put the thermometer in the tray of developer once I got into the stop, and then the first thing I looked at when I turned on the white lights was to see if my temperature drifted. I had arrived at methods to try and keep that temperature plus or minus a degree. And if it wasn't, I thought I'd done something wrong. Today my JOBO processor and Expert film drums handle the consistency better than I ever could.

I've used T-MAX 100 for a long time and it works very well for me. I know it's ins and outs. I've made a lot of good negatives with it and in the process of learning it, I've made

a number of bad negatives. It just takes practice to learn a material.

I print everything on fiber-based paper. There's nothing wrong with resin coated paper, but it's my desire to make sure that black-and-white fiber-based paper is available for as long as possible. So I'm going to spend every dollar on material

that I want to use. I don't think there's a sheet of resin coated paper in my darkroom. I've used it over the years and it's much better than it used to be, but the only way I can tell the manufacturer, whether it's Kodak or Ilford or Agfa, that this stuff is important to me is to vote with my dollars.

I have been using a lot of Kodak POLYMAX Fine Art over the last few years. I also use some Agfa Insignia paper, a little Forté Warmtone and Oriental Seagull. Those are pretty much the four papers that I work with regularly. That's plenty for me. That's a lot to juggle at one time. I have used thousands of sheets of these papers over the years, learning the idiosyncrasies of each. It takes a long time.

A lot of people just move on to the next negative after two or three sheets if they don't have the print they want. Sometimes, that's the right answer. I've printed a box of paper and then later realized that

there was nothing in the picture to begin with. It was just a foolish attachment on my part. On other occasions I have "discovered" the print I wanted only after many sheets of paper, and many hours have been invested in a negative.

**TH:** *I think that happens a lot. You're involved in some sort of experience that's really special and you want it to convey that feeling, and sometimes it's just not there.*

**JS:** I like to tell people, jokingly, at workshops that the ultimate photographic bit of knowledge is just a few words: "I wanted it that way." Because if somebody asks why is a picture this way, or why did you do that, you can always say, "I wanted it that way." I always add that if you have to explain too often that, "I wanted it that way," either there's something missing in the picture or you ought to want it another way.

You don't want people always asking you why it's out of focus or why it's too dark. Sometimes we have this attachment to the image and a viewer with objectivity can cut right to the core and ask, "why is 90% of this picture irrelevant."

When we are successful and make a picture that is exciting to others it's not based just on shutter speeds and f/stops and what sort of tricks you can pull in the darkroom. It's taking your experience and translating it in a way that is magical.

**TH:** *I was wondering if you could share some of your impressions of Ansel Adams. What was he like and how did you come to be his assistant?*

**JS:** Ansel was a down-to-earth guy. He loved to be around photographers and he found it stimulating to be around people who loved photography and other creative outlets musicians, painters, etc.— any thoughtful people.

I met Ansel in 1973 when I was a student at a two-week-long workshop in Yosemite. At that



## JOHN SEXTON

time I was a photography major in college. My desire was to go to work as an industrial or advertising photographer, maybe in a corporate environment, or an aerospace company — something like that.

But when I went to Ansel's workshop, I gained a feeling, not just from Ansel but also the other dedicated individuals that he had on his faculty, that they all truly loved photography. They pursued it with great professionalism but they obviously were in love with the process and the magic that exists within it.

It was at that workshop that I decided I wanted to really try and learn to do black- and-white the way I saw Ansel and others on the staff doing black-and-white. The prints were amazing. It was also then that I decided that I wanted to try and somehow figure out a way to do photography for myself rather than for others on commercial assignment.

That workshop, without a doubt, changed my photographic life. A year later I went back as an assistant at an Ansel Adams Gallery workshop. I applied for it and was accepted. My job was literally cleaning the darkroom floors and stuff like that. Ansel was not teaching at that workshop; Phil Hyde was one of the instructors. It was actually a color workshop. But I would do anything just to get back into the workshop experience. I also signed up as a student for a workshop with Paul Caponigro and Wynn Bullock and a number of other people.

In 1975, I got to go back as an assistant at Ansel's workshop. I think in '75 they started doing two each year, back-to-back, and I did both of them. I didn't miss an Ansel Adams workshop as either Ansel's assistant, a director or an instructor until they stopped doing them, and that was after Ansel died. As far as I know there are only two people who have been to more Ansel Adams workshops than me:

Ansel and Virginia Adams.

Being an assistant, I began to have communication with Ansel on a more regular basis. I would go visit his home every six months with a new box of prints, and make an appointment to show Ansel my photographs. He would comment on them and offer suggestions of ways to improve them, then I'd go back home and work on those

prints and make new negatives.

Anyway, in 1978, Alan Ross, an excellent photographer, was Ansel's assistant and he was moving up to be an instructor at the workshops. So, Ansel needed someone to work closely with him, just during the workshop, and he asked me if I wanted to do that, and I said, sure. That was a great experience.

The following year, Alan moved to San Francisco to open a studio and Ansel asked me to move from Southern California and work for him. At that point, he was just beginning to work on the books, *The Negative* and *The Print ... well, The Negative*, actually ... *The Print* followed ... and he asked me if I would conduct all the tests for those books.

I worked there full-time until late 1982, and then from that point on I decided to do my own photography. When I went to work for Ansel, he said, "We'll both know when it's time for you to move on;

you can't be my assistant forever. You can't be *anyone's* assistant forever."

Ansel demanded a lot of those around him, but he didn't demand any more than he demanded of himself. And we had a lot of fun. He had a great sense of humor. That's the one thing that books and videos fail at conveying effectively. I think a sense of humor, unless you're live and in person, is very difficult to convey. He was a very funny and brilliant person who used his sense of humor as a release and relief from the intensity with which he approached his projects.

One of the most memorable occurrences took place sometime around 1981. Ansel had been in the darkroom working on a negative he had made nearly 50 years earlier. He had printed it many times previously and reproduced it in a variety of books. He was working on a set of prints called *The Museum Set*, and, of course, he printed all his own negatives for exhibition prints.

Anyway, he was struggling with this negative and he'd been out to the cupboard for two or three different kinds of paper. I don't remember how many hours he worked on it, it might have even been the second day, he came out and said, "I finally got the print I wanted when I made the negative." The negative had been made in 1932! Ansel was beaming!

That excitement, that inspiration, meant so much to me because here's somebody who is at a point in his life, roughly 80 years of age, doing photography for many years, and he still found the excitement when the creative struggle led to a satisfying experience. I still look back on that day as an important day in my life.

He was so excited by that print, which he really struggled with. In his mind it was the best print he had ever made of that negative. I really felt reaffirmed that pho-





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tography was something that could be a lasting and rewarding experience. And I don't think it's just photography. I think it is the entire creative process. It's being involved in something that is exciting to you.

I remember the magic I found in the darkroom when I first saw a print made. It's not like every sheet of paper is magic anymore, but when you get one that you really want, it truly is magic. I have a pretty good idea, of how the whole thing works, but I still can't quite comprehend how it all works. The fact that one can work in the darkroom, then turn on the lights and there's this picture in front of you, is still pretty amazing to me. Somehow it's far more amazing than waiting for an inkjet print to churn out the other end of the machine or watching that little wrist-watch icon in Photoshop. I mean, they're great tools, don't get me wrong, but there's just something about being in the darkroom that's a more personal and sensual experience for me.

**TH:** *Let's talk about Places of Power. How does one go about dialing up NASA and saying, "Hi, I was wondering if I could have complete access to the Space Shuttle inside and out?" How did you get the whole thing going and who was that first call to?*

**JS:** Well, the first calls were naively directed to the wrong people. I first got the idea to photograph the Space Shuttle in March of 1990 driving home from the first day of photographing Hoover Dam. I was sitting at a traffic signal and asking myself why I was photographing ancient Anasazi sites, power plants, and now Hoover Dam. That's when I understood that I was examining the aesthetics of technology through time. I decided the Space Shuttle would be perfect to represent today's technology.

I unexpectedly started photographing power plants in 1987

when I was looking for a field trip location for a workshop. I wanted to challenge the students aesthetically and technically. One of the individuals in the workshop was the general manager of a power company. I had seen one 8x10 print of his the year before, of the inside of this power plant, and it was really great. So, when I arrived in Wisconsin to scout for

this workshop location I called him and said I remembered that picture. I wanted to come see about the possibility of bringing the class to the power plant. Fortunately, he said that it was a good idea.

When I walked in there I thought, "This is amazing! I've never seen anything like this before." I didn't really want to photograph the power plant even though it looked so beautiful.

At the same time it had this kind of antithetical aspect to what I thought my photography of the landscape was about. But I did make photographs and I kept going back and photographing the power plants at this power cooperative for myself.

In 1990, I had to go to PMA in Las Vegas to sign posters along with other photographers for Nikon. They gave us all a day off and I thought, what am I going to do on my day off? I could go out

to Valley of Fire, I could go to Red Rock Canyon, then I thought, geez, I bet there's some really neat stuff at Hoover Dam. I'd never been inside Hoover Dam, so I contacted them and sent them some power plant pictures. They said I could come and look around and take what they call a "nooks and crannies tour." It was amazing! I photographed all day and into the night. As I was driving back to my hotel in Las Vegas I was thinking, "Wowee, what a great day of photography! Why is it so great? Why am I making these pictures now?"

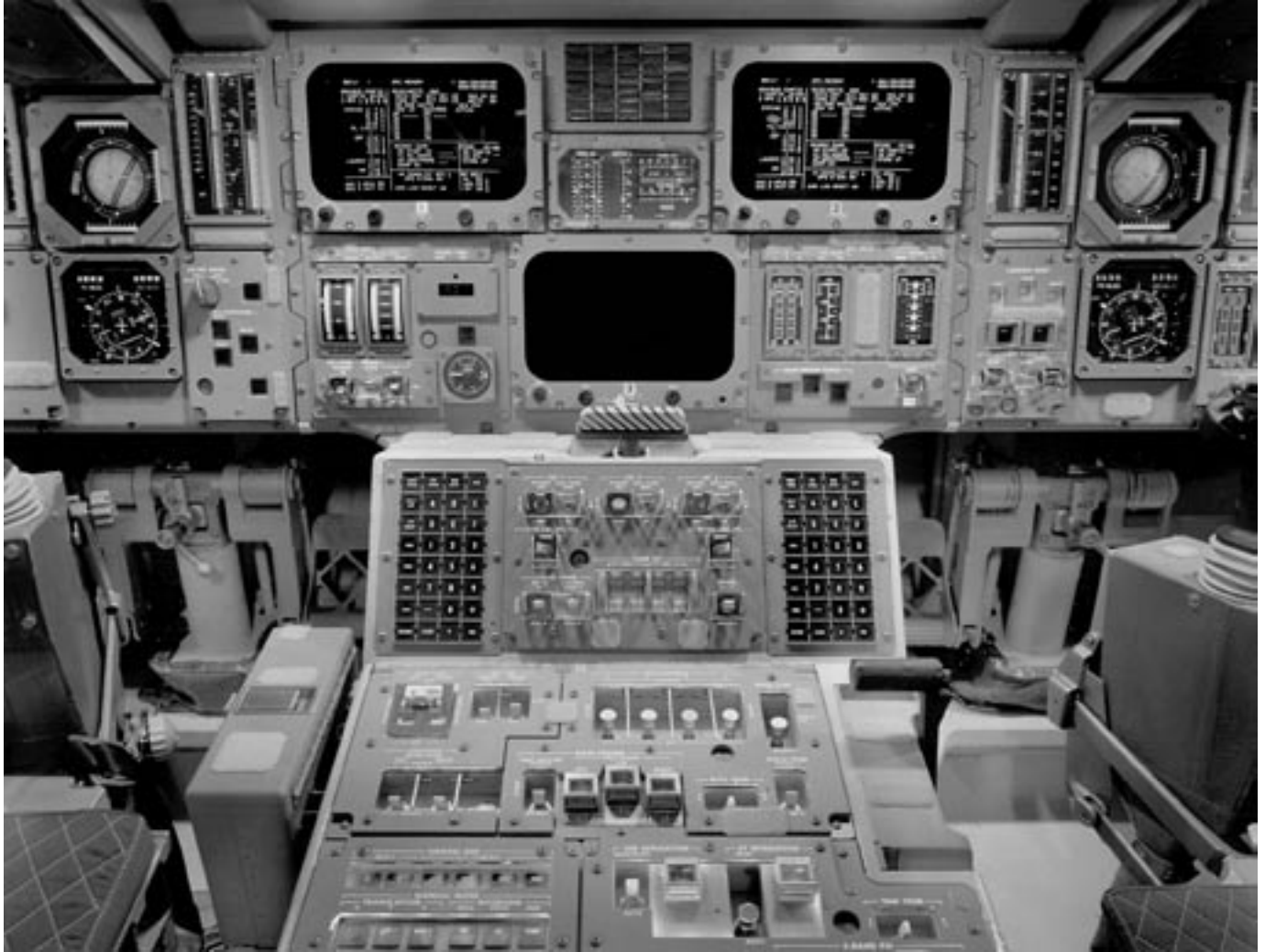
I realized that the thread of continuity in my mind was that these were all things that were built, crafted and engineered by human beings, and they also extended a thousand years in time.

I now needed something that was futuristic, and it was at this traffic light that I got the idea to photograph the Space Shuttle. I made my first exposure three years later. I spent a fair amount of time and energy trying to figure out how to get permission.

It was difficult to explain to NASA what I wanted to do. I wanted to reveal the aesthetic beauty I hoped I would find in the Space Shuttle, but I had never actually seen a Space Shuttle, let alone photographed one. I was trying to explain that I wanted to photograph the Shuttle in a way I had not seen it photographed before: as a piece of functional sculpture and artwork. It was difficult to try and explain what I wanted. All I had was images in my mind.

A lot of those images evaporated very quickly, when I first visited Kennedy Space Center because I thought I would find this spacecraft just sitting in an open hangar, if it wasn't out on the launch pad. Well, I found out that it was completely encumbered in apparatus.

When I first entered what I now know is an orbiter processing facility, I finally met my first Space Shuttle. I was really nervous that I



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wouldn't have a reaction ... that it would just be a "bucket of bolts." All of a sudden I looked up and I saw the distinctive mosaic pattern of the tiles. I realized that I was standing right underneath the orbiter Endeavor. I could feel my heart start to pound, and I knew in that instant that my photographic project was valid; that there were pictures to be made.

I made my first picture, which happens to be in the book — a photograph of landing gear. And then I think I did a tile detail that's in the book as well. So, that was in March. I came back a few weeks later to try and photograph a launch, but I didn't even get to see the launch; it was aborted.

My objective was never to get a launch picture. I've tried twice, and I did get to see one launch, which was most memorable and impressive, but I have zero launch pictures. I wanted to just photograph the pure aesthetic of the shuttle. Seeing the launch, however, gave me an entirely new respect for the power and complexity of the entire Space Shuttle system.

On my second visit to the Kennedy Space Center, there were two people from NASA in an office looking at the pictures and the one fellow says, "He really *is* photographing the Shuttle in a different way." That really meant the world to me. That was what I was trying to explain to them!

The people at the Kennedy Space Center have been just terrific. I've spent 13 weeks there since March of 1990. Some people ask, is NASA paying you to make the pictures? Well, I wish! It's all my expense, which is fine. This is not a commercial assignment, it's a personal assignment, and I'm not done yet.

It was really hard to get permission and try and convince the people at NASA of what I was trying to do because they're continually bombarded with photographers on assignment. They are all working on

one aspect or another of the space program, and there are only so many people that NASA can accommodate. I can't offer anything but the nicest comments about the people at the Kennedy Space Center.

**TH:** *Are you still working on Places of Power?*

**JS:** No, *Places of Power* as a project is done. But I'll continue to explore the magic and the mystery of the

**TH:** *I'm curious about any photographers whom you find inspiring or interesting, current or historical.*

**JS:** Certainly Ansel was a big influence. I have also been influenced by Wynn Bullock and the mystery that he conveyed in his photographs. I also love the graphic expression of Brett Weston's photographs — they are photographs that still give me goose bumps when I see the original prints.

I've got a Paul Caponigro print on the wall that I bought at a workshop in 1974 for a hundred bucks, which was fifty bucks more than I had. I had to borrow fifty from my photography instructor. I've looked at that picture for 26 years and it's still a magical image.

I think Jerry Uelsmann's photographs are very exciting. I really love Jerry's work. I like the sense of humor in many of them, and the surrealistic quality, and I also have the highest respect for the precision and the technical expertise in the way he combines images and makes it look so easy.

**TH:** *Do you have any other tips you could share with the readers — something you think might make their life easier in the darkroom?*

**JS:** I'll start on the camera side of things, and then see if I can think of a darkroom tip. Now, I think this is really good advice. I always try to make two identical exposures, whether that's with sheet film or roll film. Occasionally there are times when the picture just disappears, and there's no sense exposing a second piece of film if the picture isn't there, but so many times I've messed up a negative. I've accidentally scratched it, or dinged it going in and out of a negative carrier; or with sheet film I've had some sort of problem in processing. There are a few pictures I have gotten only because I had that second negative.

In a general sense, I think it's important to "listen to the materials." And by that I am not try-

Anasazi sites. There are specific pictures in my mind I want to make at the Kennedy Space Center.

My plan at the present, is in two years to do a book of all Space Shuttle photographs. It will include a number of pictures from *Places of Power*, but it will also include lots of additional images of the Shuttle and its related support equipment. In the 22 or so Shuttle pictures in the book, I couldn't show everything that I wanted to show. It's a magic machine, and I'm anxious to get back to work on that project. I have lots of photographs I still want to make.



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ing to be metaphysical. To me, listening involves more than your ears — it involves being receptive. When I look at a print in the darkroom, I ask the question, is this achieving what I want? If not, what is missing? Then I try and take the necessary steps to reach that goal. I always try to take steps that are synchronized with what the photographic material wants to do. I try to think like film and I

try to think like paper — and that sort of drives my decision-making process in terms of exposure and contrast, and dodging and burning when necessary.

I'm not there to "argue" with the paper, I'm there to "converse" with the paper. And if we have a good conversation, we're both going to end up happy. I'm going to end up with the print I want, and the photographic paper is going to be happy to give that to me. That being said, sometimes what I want does not exist in the negative — and there's nothing I can do in conversation to make that appear. So I have to buffer that with objectivity. That's a little more general than a specific tip, but maybe that is something that might be helpful to your readers.

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## The Hills are Ablaze

### FALL COLOR IN NEW ENGLAND

Every year the town of Hanover, New Hampshire, celebrates “Christmas in October,” the centerpiece of which is a home decorated room by room in full holiday regalia by talented designers. The event draws crowds of people from all over, and it usually coincides with another crowd pleaser — Fall foliage time in New England.

So it's your first photography trip to the area? Being a New Hampshire native I have a few suggestions for those photographers lucky enough to make the journey.

BY JA DENSMORE



The Connecticut River Valley is the perfect place to be at this time of the year. The area includes the Connecticut River which is the border between New Hampshire and Vermont. Locate Hanover on a road map of New England. Hanover, on the New Hampshire side, is about half way up the state, right on the river. Using this as the center, draw a circle with a radius of approximately 40 miles. The photographic opportunities that occur within this circle will keep you very busy.

The peak foliage moves from the North to the South. The chilly Fall



nights complemented with warm days make perfect conditions for super fall foliage. Sugar maples, white birches and other hardwoods dress themselves in brilliant hues of reds, yellows and oranges mixed with leaves that are still green. Breathtaking!

First and foremost pick the right date for your trip. There have always been debates about the perfect time for peak color. Through the years I have observed that the first week in October is probably the best bet. The reason that this is my pick is that it gives one a little leeway in making choices. If the color has not peaked in the Hanover area one can drive north where the color has already started. On the other hand, if the color has passed its peak in this area, one may travel south to catch the color.



As I mentioned before, the colors start in the colder north and gradually work their way south.

Here are few suggestions which might help you have a successful trip.

1. Don't be afraid to travel the back roads. Discover for yourself scenes you would like to photograph. If one area doesn't interest you drive on to another. There are plenty of places even along main highways. Caution: don't photograph on Interstates except in designated rest areas!
2. Interesting shots — Even though sugaring takes place in late Winter or early Spring, sugar houses bordered by sugar maples ablaze in fall colors are great photo subjects; fields





## FALL COLOR IN NEW ENGLAND

and pastures, especially those with livestock; New England red barns, with hills and trees for background; streams with colorful leaves floating, rocks and shrubs.

Churches and country stores are available subjects, but ask permission before photographing people or homes or accessing private land. Most New Englanders will be delighted to accommodate you if you



PHOTOS © 2000.JA DENSMORE

ask first. (As a common courtesy, always pick up your film wrappers, empty cans, etc., — keep it pristine for the next person). Remember to get releases if you intend to sell.

3. Even unexpected places can produce great photo opportunities. One of my best Fall photos was taken at the far end of a grocery store parking lot, where I had set up my tripod while waiting for my daughter to make a quick dinner pick up!
4. Ask the natives. Even though questions may be getting to be “old hat” to them, if you take the time and use the right approach (courtesy always helps) you might be rewarded with a delightful suggestion or get to share in a secret spot.
5. Make your reservations early if you plan to stay in a motel or country inn! Rooms are in very short supply at this time of the year.
6. Don't fret about inclement weather. Even in heavy cloud cover or light



rain you can get great foliage photos. On a cloudy day or in light rain use saturated film such as Fuji Velvia or the new Kodak Ektachrome 100 S.

7. October weather calls for a mixed bag of clothes. In a matter of hours hot humid weather can turn to cold sleet or snow. Layered shirts, vests, jackets and rainsuits should be a part of your gear. Bring a waterproof cover for your camera and, if plan to do any hiking, a backpack to carry your equipment



## PUTTING ON A

**Y**ou wouldn't handicap yourself by playing golf with a bowling ball, so why handicap your high quality lens by using an inferior filter?

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## FALL COLOR IN NEW ENG-

8. Remember that a heavy rain followed by wind will cause the leaves to drop off the trees, thus the end of the Fall foliage season.
9. Be prepared that occasionally, regardless of your well laid plans, Autumn in New England can have all the punch of a grade "B" movie. If this happens, take it as your chance to enjoy the local color — church suppers, antique shops, country



stores, art galleries and craft shows. Perhaps an off color year is nature's way of luring you back again for the glorious trees that are so famous in New England!

For information on fall foliage in the New England area, contact the New Hampshire State Tourism office in Concord 1-800-386-4664 or (603)386-4664, or the Vermont State Tourism office in Montpelier 1-800-837-6668 or (802) 828-3237. The square format photographs accompanying this article were made using a Hasselblad. The images with a rectangular aspect ratio were made using a Nikon.

Ja Densmore, a former director of Professional Photographers of Colorado, studied at the Winona School of Photography. His work has been exhibited in Colorado and published in newspapers and magazines including, The Boston Globe, Outdoor Photographer, U.S. Ski Racing, and In-Line. Ja has also led photography workshops for The Photographers' Formulary Workshops in Montana. 📸





Pilings, Oregon, 6x7, Provia

# Roadside Attractions

BY STEPHEN PETERSON

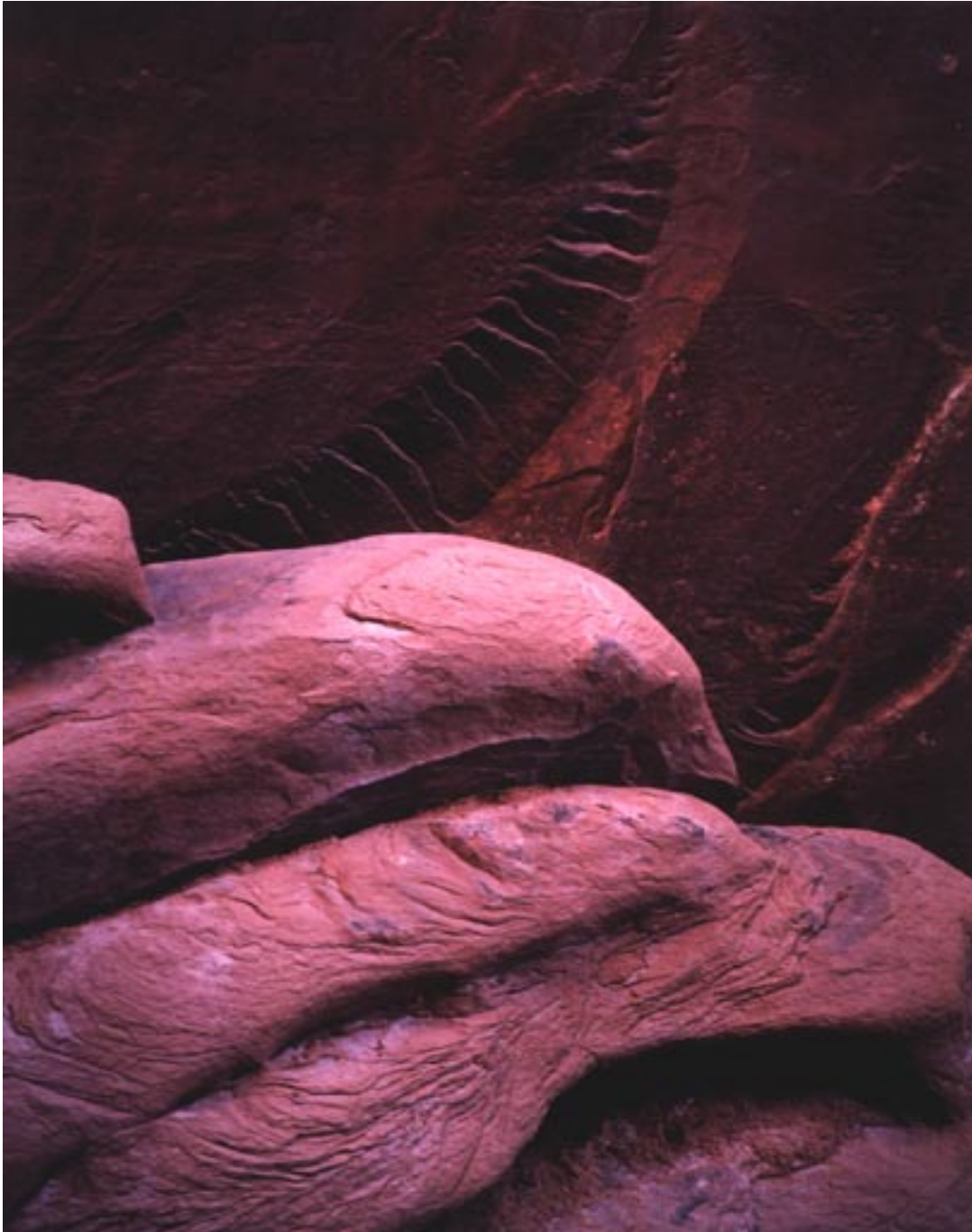
“Although I live in one of the more photogenic states, I rarely get the opportunity to photograph the spectacular. Ansel Adams’ “Clearing Winter Storm” or “Moonrise Over Hernandez” just don’t seem to present themselves to me. Wanting to photograph and express my love of the land forced me to seek out the details of the landscape — what I call “roadside attractions.” The photographs shown here were all taken a few feet from either a road or trail on ordinary days. The approach is to train myself to look — carefully look — while driving or walking. Often images present themselves almost subliminally in my peripheral vision. Brakes screech and the car is put into reverse, or I dead stop on the trail to examine a potential find. *continued on page 40*







STEPHEN PETERSON



STEPHEN PETERSON



Horseshoe Bend, Arizona, 4x5, Provia

STEPHEN PETERSON



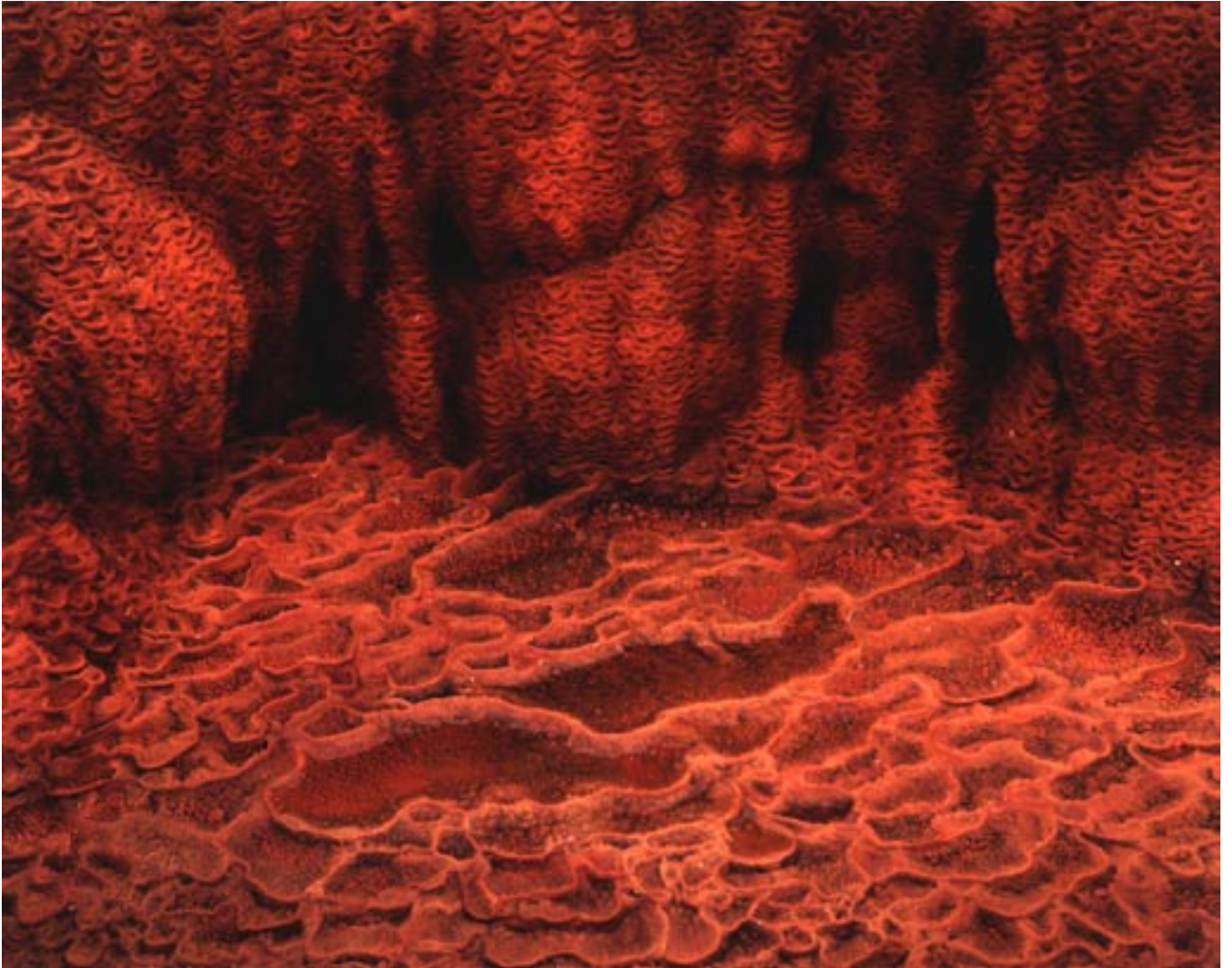


STEPHEN PETERSON



Lily Pads, Oregon, 6x7, Velvia

STEPHEN PETERSON



STEPHEN PETERSON



Hot Spring, Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming, 6x7, Provia





PHOTO © 1996 ERIC NEILSEN

Redwood Forest, Jedediah Smith State Park, California, 35mm, Delta 400. Hand colored using pencils and a slight sepia tone.

# An Alternative Goes Mainstream

BY ERIC NEILSEN

For years, the photographic world has relied on graded papers. However, what was once a very graded world, rich in silver, has since become a place of variable contrast. Everywhere you — look the shelves of camera stores and the pages of catalogs — there is box after box of variable contrast paper. And down there in the dust are just a few boxes of graded paper.

I must admit that I have found many reasons to use non-graded paper. Among these is that they allow print

control that just cannot be matched by graded paper. They also allow a greater flexibility to adjust to the quality and densities of many different negatives. However, not all situations need a non-graded solution and after all, graded papers do possess many desirable characteristics.

Over the last two decades a revival of sorts has been under foot, one that takes us back to alternatives to the

straight “out of the box” silver prints. The revival to which I refer is the revival of the bromoil transfer process. It is rare that an alternative process contributes to the world of silver-gelatin printing but it appears to have happened.

As a result of this revival, David Lewis, an accomplished bromoil printer and author of *The Art of Bromoil & Transfer*, has introduced a graded paper especially for the bromoil process that

*continued on page 60*



Untoned



Septia Toned



Selenium Toned

## STEPHEN PETERSON

*Roadside...., continued from page 30*

I generally use a "viewing frame", a card with a rectangular hole in the format of my camera. This allows me to isolate the image and find the best viewpoint without hauling the cameras out of the car or backpack. The card also allows me to select the best focal length of lens to use. If the image looks promising, only then does the camera come out of the pack.

I especially enjoy the mystery of abstracts. Many of my photographs are lacking size and object reference. Form, color and texture dominate. As I look over my color work from past years I seem to see monochromatically. My abstracts are predominately one color but often have accents of the complement.

#### Technical

Although I have a color enlarger I don't have the time to print, so the chemistry goes bad before I can use it. The prints are all made from transpar-

encies by a local commercial lab (Borge Andersen). I generally prefer smaller prints, 8x10" but occasionally go to 16x20" on a matte surface. The 6x7cm camera is a Pentax with lenses from 35 to 200mm, the latter sometimes used with a 2X extender. The 4x5 camera system is based on a Toyo field camera with lenses from 65 to 360mm. I have a large collection of tripods but mostly use a Gitzo carbon (5 lbs. with head) for backpacking or a Ries 100 series with a big ball or geared head (8-9 lbs.) when I need extra stability. Polarizers and filters are interchangeable on all lenses with the appropriate adapter.

I only use one-degree spotmeters (and have two in case one fails). For color work I like Velvia and Provia in their Quickload packages for the 4x5. This package provides sand- and dust-free film at a minimum weight. I always use a tripod giving me the freedom to use any aperture to control depth-of-field. The spot meter allows me to evaluate the contrast range of the

subject and place values where I want them. When shooting color I usually place the highlights to preserve detail, and for black-and-white I place the shadows and alter development to preserve detail.

#### About the photographer

I have been photographing for 48 years, but only seriously (artwise) for the last five. I have been a newspaper photographer (speed Graphic era) and done professional biomedical photography. I invented and sell the Cascade photographic printwasher. By profession I am a scientist/engineer, currently developing life state biosensors for military and civilian use. I have recently written photographic articles, including "Photo Hints" for *Photovision*, and some of my work has been shown on the PhotoTripUSA web site. I enjoy hiking Utah's deserts and mountains. Fortunately, my wife shares my love of the land and puts up with a basement full of photographic stuff. 📷

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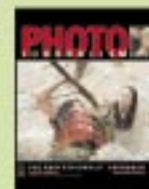
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# The Film Developing Cookbook

## Review by Paul Brenner

In 1994, Steve Anchell wrote *The Darkroom Cookbook*. A superb work, it contains a great deal of useful information on topics such as film and paper development and related processes, with a special emphasis on mixing your own solutions. In a review I wrote at the time, I concluded with the comment that it seemed destined to become a classic. I think that prediction has been borne out.

Anchell and a colleague, Bill Troop, have now written *The Film Developing Cookbook*. The book is based upon research Troop had done a number of years ago. Together they re-researched, re-tested, and updated it for this book. When I heard about it, I was excited, but also curious as to what their approach would be. After all, Anchell had covered the subject of film development (as well as many others) quite well in *The Darkroom Cookbook*. What could they add?

Well, *The Film Developing Cookbook* adds quite a lot, as a matter of fact, in large part because it is a different kind of book than the earlier work. *The Darkroom Cookbook* focused to a large extent on darkroom processes and formulas, although there was certainly a great deal of general information on topics such as film development, paper development, stop baths and fixers, etc. While not without opinions and recommendations, *Darkroom* was fairly straightforward, objective and matter-of-fact. While it contained historical references, its focus was a detailed description of various formulas and their applications.

*The Film Developing Cookbook* is different not only in that it devotes an entire book to a subject which

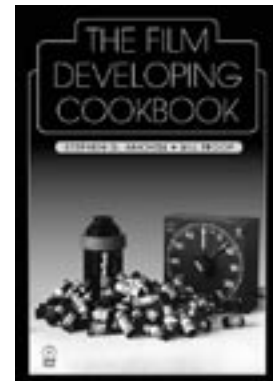
comprised only a portion of the earlier book. It is also quite different in approach and tone. It contains a great deal of narrative history and numerous opinions. Not everyone will agree with all the opinions, but at least they are expressed as that, not as absolute truth, as is often the case. The book is a treasure trove of information about the historical origins of numerous developers and their uses. (It also contains a number of entertaining sidebar quotes, some of which apply only obliquely to photography.) If *Darkroom* could be called a reference book, *Film Developing* is more of a text book.

In the introduction, Bill Troop talks about trying to make the book interesting enough for photographers to enjoy reading. In that they truly succeeded. As much as I appreciate *Darkroom*, I cannot quite see myself choosing it as a book to curl up with. I could do that (and have) with *Film Developing*.

*Film Developing* moves from the general to the specific. It begins with overview chapters on developers and films. It continues with chapters on developer ingredients and development procedures. It then moves on to a series of chapters on various classes of developers: solvent developers, non-solvent developers, super-fine grain developers, etc. The chapters on solvent and non-solvent developers cover the majority of the developers most photographers use.

The book concludes with a chapter on after-development processes and several useful appendices, including sections on mixing chemicals and darkroom safety.

The focus of the book is not on the



The Film Developing Cookbook  
by Steve Anchell & Bill Troop

formulas and mixing although the formulas are given. The emphasis is on how and why various developers work the way they do, and when and how to use them. This moves the emphasis of the book away from being a “cookbook,” notwithstanding the title, and more towards being a primer on the use of the various developers.

Perhaps primer is a bad choice of words, if it suggest that this is an elementary book. It most certainly is not. I believe that every black-and-white photographer will learn a great deal from this book, no matter how experienced he or she is.

It is probably true that there is no area of black-and-white photography which is so full of legends, myth and lore as film development. As I read *Film Developing*, it occurred to me that it speaks authoritatively on more issues surrounding this topic than I have ever seen in one place. As I read this book, I felt more than a little awe for the amount of scholarship as well as experimentation which went into it.

*The Film Developing Cookbook* is superb complement to *The Darkroom Cookbook*, but it is much more than that. It is an invaluable source book on the subject of film development. I think every black-and-white photographer, whether or not he or she is interested in mixing formulas from scratch, should own it.

I think we have another classic here. ■

# 6" BEHIND THE LENS

## Expose for the Shadows...

BY THOMAS HARROP

Other than pointing your camera at ugly things, bad exposure will ruin more photos than nearly any other problem. There are many ways to approach the problems of exposure but let's begin at the beginning by examining what makes an exposure correct. The answer is not always straightforward. While nearly all situations offer at least one "correct" exposure, most offer many more than that. The best place to begin then, is at the end.

With the exception of gross under-exposure, all exposures lead to some sort of final image. In order to expose your film to the proper amount of light, it is important to visualize how you want the tonality in the scene to appear in the final print or transparency. Ansel Adams called this previsualization. The term is commonly misconstrued as meaning that you must decide exactly what the final image is going to be before tripping the shutter. I propose

another definition for previsualization which I believe Ansel might have approved. Previsualization is the act of accurately determining how your film and paper will render the scene before you. In other words, to previsualize you need not make every decision about the final print, only the decisions that will allow you to capture tones on the film that will permit the interpretation you wish to convey.

Working in black-and-white there is one overriding consideration that must be addressed before any exposure technique can be considered. The rendering of an image on film occurs because silver halide crystals react with photons of light roughly in proportion to the brightness of the scene the camera's lens projects onto them. I say roughly because the system is not perfect.

That being said, we can generally view the photographic process as a

linear system where a higher degree of exposure leads to greater density in the negative. This in turn blocks light in the enlarging or contact printing process and creates less density in the final image.

Since less density in the negative equates to more density in the print, we must reduce the amount of silver converted to metal in the shadow areas. We do this by decreasing the amount of light that strikes this part of the image. In order to build usable density in the print, the negative areas must be as clear as possible. If negative film had an infinite density range we could simply expose the shadows to produce a dark gray and the highlights to be darker gray. Unfortunately, for highlights to print with detail they must be exposed to be less than the blackest black (called D-Max) the film can produce. This means that the shadow areas of the negative must be as clear as possible to allow enough density difference to make a

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Photos by Stephen Francis

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## 6" BEHIND THE LENS



PHOTO © 2000 THOMAS HARROP

This image of dinosaur tracks made in Golden, Colorado, was created using Zone System exposure technique. The darkest shadow in which texture was desired was metered using a spot meter and the value recorded. From this reading the aperture was closed two stops to allow for the fact that all light meters read for middle gray (Zone V) not for a textured shadow value of Zone III. See text for a complete explanation.

full scale print.

The net result of all this is that exposure of the shadow values in the negative becomes the most critical part of the exposure process. If the highlights are too dense we can use something like Farmer's Reducer to remove density and make them printable. If, however, the shadows don't contain some exposed silver, the shadow detail will be lost. In some cases the shadow detail may be extracted from the negative through

the use of intensification. The best alternative by far is to make sure that enough density is in the shadow area at the time of exposure. In other words, "expose for the shadows," something most photographers have heard since they first picked up a camera.

The zone system, created by Ansel Adams and Fred Archer to teach tone control, is by far the most pervasive system for integrating science into photographic practice. In its simplest

form, the zone system breaks the entire tonal scale from black to white into (depending on whom you read) nine, ten or eleven zones (there are even those who say that Ansel had a secret zone which he never told anyone about). The zones are arrived at by dividing the entire tonal range into a number of sections. Although each section comprises a continuum of tones, the tones are averaged in value for each zone and the zone is generally repre-

sented by the tone which represents the average for that section. For example, Zone V (zones are usually represented by roman numerals) is represented by 18% gray, the tone which is considered to be halfway between black and white in reflectance value.

On the zone scale, the shadows are represented by low numbers. Zones 0, I and II are black without detail (in the print). Zone III is the first part of the tonal scale that shows texture and detail. While we can make any of these values the basis of our exposure, Zone III is the simplest to use because it can be determined subjectively at the time of exposure. Simply view the scene you are photographing and determine what you want to be the darkest shadow area to render with detail. The operative part of the sentence is "with detail." You don't want to choose the blackest shadow area in the scene, rather, be sure you are selecting the part of the scene you want to render as dark, but not black, in the image. At this point it is important to interject that a light meter capable of making reflected readings is necessary for using the zone system (there are work-arounds that can be attempted but in my experience they have all been less than satisfactory). For most Zone practitioners this means using a spot meter capable of reading a tiny part of the scene.

Once you have determined the tonality in the scene you wish to render as Zone III, simply read that part of the scene with your light meter and note the exposure value from the meter. You must make one more adjustment to make this a valid Zone III reading. All light meters provide a reading that gives proper exposure for a subject that is in the center of the visual reflectance scale. In other words, the meter is telling you how to set your camera aperture if the subject is 18% gray. In Zone terms, this reading, without interpretation, would render the tone as Zone V. In order to place the shadow value at a point on the exposure scale that creates a textured shadow in the print we must close the lens down two stops creating less exposure in the shadow value.

In teaching photography as a full-

time instructor at the Art Institute of Colorado and at a variety of workshops, I have found that this one concept improves the work of most black-and-white photographers more than almost anything. By exposing for the shadows we can almost guarantee that some sort of image can be made from a black-and-white negative. In the next installment we will look at the other side of the equation: ...develop for the

highlights!

Thomas Harrop is a photographer and photography instructor. He has both bachelor's and master's degrees from Brooks Institute of Photography and is a member of the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain. He has served on the staff at several national photo magazines and worked as a professional photographer for nearly 20 years both freelance and on contract for NASA at Edwards Air Force Base. ▶

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# IN THE DARKROOM

## Taming the Mammoths On Developing the Big Negatives

Imagine yourself standing in total darkness preparing to place several sheets of 12x20" film into the prewash tray. It's a familiar procedure, maybe even routine, to process six sheets at a time as you've done many times in the past.

But this time you lose concentration for a moment, or you become a bit overconfident. Half of the film is already sinking into the developer tray while you hold the remaining sheets fanned out and ready to develop. As you grab the next sheet with your free hand the film slips through your fingers. The

### BURKHARDT KIEGELAND

sheet of film makes almost no sound as it touches down on the floor and glides away in some direction. There is no way to guess where the film landed — only silence. What do you do now?

This has happened to me twice — first a sheet of 12x20" disappeared, the second time, two years later, it was a sheet of 20x24". Fortunately, I won both sheets back, but don't ask me how long I was creeping around on all fours and groping in the darkness. My film processing room measures about 15x10 feet — in total darkness it becomes bigger and bigger.

My first adventures in large format photography happened during the early 1970s when I bought a 4x5" Sinar-P for my studio. At that time I was working on two books, one about collecting handmade scale models of railways and the other about collecting antique clocks and watches. Because I needed a certain quality of color illustration I was shooting almost exclusively color

transparencies with just a couple of black-and-whites. The bulk of black-and-white I did with my Rollei SL66.

After finishing my day's work in the back rooms of museums or in private collections, I used to deliver my box of exposed chromes to a professional film lab. The sheets of 4x5" black-and-white I processed in a JOBO drum. Although I knew about tray processing, it was not something I attempted during this period. Having only read about it in books, the process seemed old-fashioned, slow and uncomfortable.

This point of view changed rapidly when I put aside smaller format cameras and began doing serious work in large format. I began by using a Master Technika as well as an old 18x24cm wooden field camera. Not much later I added an old Korona 11x14" and a Folmer & Schwing 12x20" banquet format camera. I had fallen in love with the large ground glass!

### Rotation Versus Tray Development

Large format film can be processed using one of two basic methods. Either you place the film in a tube and agitate

## IN THE DARKROOM

by rotating the tube, the developing chemistry and the negative, or you place the chemistry in trays normally used for developing black-and-white prints and agitate by interleaving the sheets repeatedly for the duration of the processing time.

Both methods have their inherent strong points and weaknesses. Let's start with the pros for rotation:

- Reliable, repeatable results. Using one of the smaller JOBO machines that rotates the drum in a temperature controlled waterbath you will always have repeatable temperature and agitation.
- Clean working. Your hands stay free from chemical solutions. Using the lift makes your processing very comfortable.

- Specialized Drums. JOBO offers a range of drums to handle most large format film sizes. JOBO drum #3010 is designed for up to 10 sheets of 4x5". Drum #3005 is made for processing five sheets of 8x10" film, 4x10" or 5x7". Bigger sizes such as 11x14", 8x20", 12x20" and 20x24" are processed in drums of series #3062 of which shorter or longer versions are available.

- Versatility. The big drum can also be used for developing color prints.

### *And the cons?*

There are very few if you do not consider the necessary investment for a JOBO as a con. Although the investment may seem large, it definitely pays off in terms of increased production from

your darkroom. In fact, there is really just one weakness when working with very large film: with negatives 11x14" and larger even the biggest drums allow processing of only one or two sheets at a time. Coming home from a day trip with a 12x20" or 8x20" camera, one rarely has less than a dozen sheets to process. For many photographers, processing these sheets one by one in a drum would just be too time consuming. Some people don't mind doing it this way, but there is another method that is faster and more efficient for large batches of film.

### Tray Chic

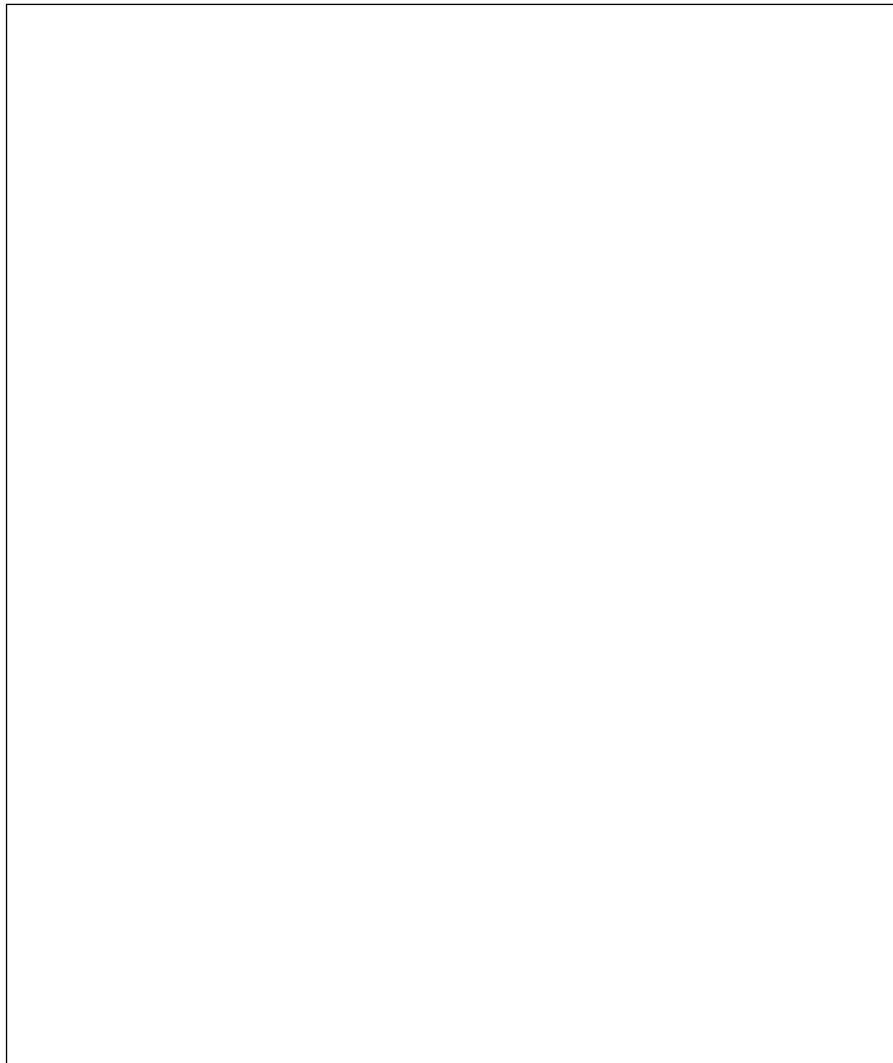
Let's look on tray development now. Even those who prefer tray processing must admit that there are some problems with it.

- Tray processing must be done in total darkness. Even using development by inspection, the faint green light one uses to view the developing film is only turned on for a brief period.
- Your hands spend a great deal of time in the developer, stop and fixer solutions.
- Chemical smells are much stronger than processing in the JOBO tube.

### A Leap of Faith

These problems can create a psychological barrier for those considering making the switch to trays. Good organization and proper work habits, however, can make it a very rewarding way to work. Start by organizing your trays and other materials so that you can find them easily, whether the lights are on or off. Also, make sure the space in which you work is uncluttered. That handy stool you keep in the room can become an obstacle in the dark.

It is not necessary to put your hands in the chemistry. Make it a habit to wear rubber gloves throughout the process. This is especially important when developing in Pyro. Wearing gloves not only protects from staining and possible harmful health effects but also helps remove the psychological barrier mentioned before. Many people are concerned that wearing gloves



**THE FAMILY OF THE YOUNG DOCTOR.** Contact print of a 20x24" negative on Bergger VCNB neutral, D72. Film Bergger BPF200, tray development in Pyro PMK.

can result in a loss of dexterity. With a little practice, however, the hands adapt to the difference in feeling and it becomes possible to do anything in the darkroom while gloved, even unload film holders.

The last problem with tray processing is the smell of the chemicals. A respirator and a good ventilation system should take care of that for most people. If you are highly sensitive to odors, or have asthma or some other condition, you should consult your physician using open trays for processing your film.

### The Benefits, In a Nutshell

Tray processing produces very evenly developed film when handled correctly. We will discuss what "correctly" means later in this article. The procedure also saves time over other methods since it allows processing of more than two sheets at once. Finally, working in open trays permits the use of the "development by inspection" method which can be very reliable after some experience has been gained.

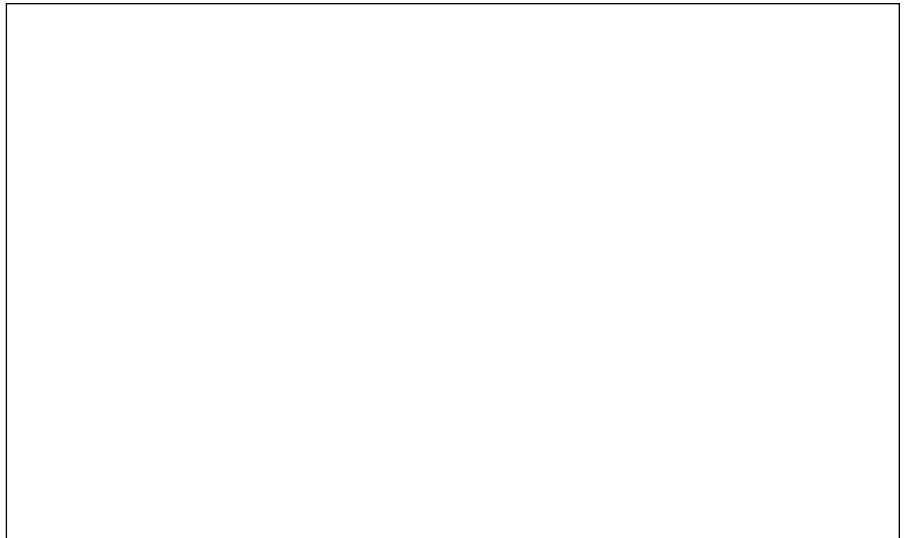
### Going with the Workflow

Generally, it is easiest and most efficient to process smaller sheet sizes (up to 4x5") in a JOBO drum. Rollo-Pyro is a good choice of developer for these smaller sizes. Negatives larger than 4x5" can be processed in PMK Pyro with excellent results.

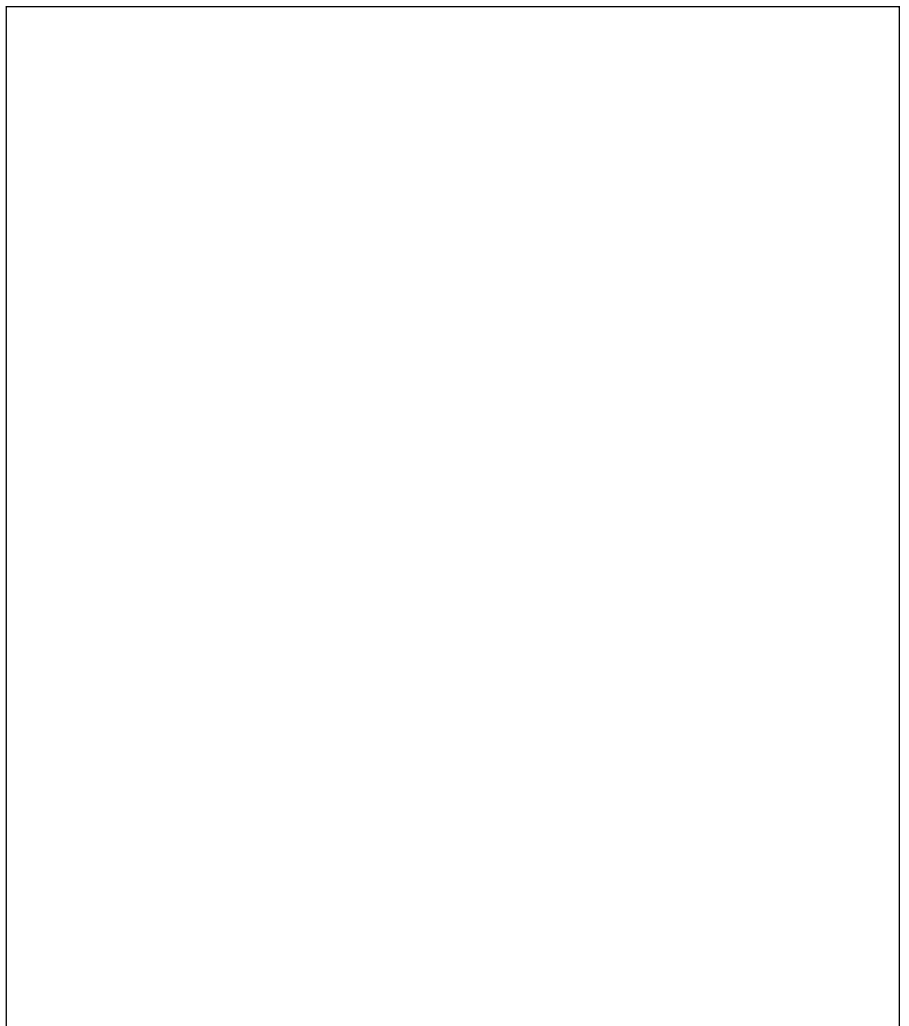
For most film processing a set a three trays works very well. The number of trays and their size is dictated both by the largest negative to be processed and size of the workspace.

The trays should not be much bigger than the size of the negatives. Trays that are too big cause scratches because the negatives can move around too much. It is also important to have enough chemistry in the trays since too little can contribute to scratching as well. Here are some suggested amounts for different film sizes:

- Ten sheets of 8x10" in a tray size 8x10" need three liters of solution.
- Six sheets of 12x20" in a tray size 16x20" need five liters of solution.
- Six sheets of 20x24" in a tray size



**CASINO** 12x20" contactprint on AZO Grade 2, developed in Amidol. Film Ilford HP5+, tray development with Pyro PMK.



**THE LUXEMBOURGIAN PHOTOGRAPHER RAYMONT CLEMENT.** Contact print of a 20x24" negative on Bergger VCNB neutral, D72. By substituting the benzotriazole for potassium bromide the paper looks cold-bluish. Film Bergger BPF200, Pyro PMK.

## IN THE DARKROOM

20x24" need eight liters of solution.

### Emulsion Side Down

There is an ongoing debate between those who believe that tray processing should be done with the emulsion up or down. While arguments can be made on both sides, there are two reasons that emulsion down seems to be superior. Since the prints are shuffled by sliding them out and placing them on top of the stack, the soft emulsion is protected from the corner of the print being replaced on the stack. In addition, when using the development by inspection method, the print should always be inspected through the base. If the print is being processed with the emulsion up, this means turning the print over for inspection, again increasing the possibility of scratching.

### Setting up the Trays

When setting up the three processing trays, the center tray should be positioned so it is close to a steady supply of water. Fill this tray completely as it will be used for the prewash, and later as a rinse to stop development.

Place the box containing your exposed film on a desk and grab the sheets one by one, allowing them to slide into the prewash tray. With your right hand, softly push the sheets under the water. Using this method you always have one dry hand and the prints don't stick together. Once all the sheets are in the prewash, begin shuffling according to the following description (This method should be followed throughout all the chemical steps):

**First agitation cycle:** Grab the sheet from the bottom of the pile, pull it to the right, place it on top of the pile, press it under the fluid. Continue until all sheets have been through one cycle in the stack. Simply count the sheets as you pull them from the stack to determine when all sheets have been agitated.

**Second agitation cycle:** Same as the first cycle, but pull the sheets from the far end of the tray.

**Third agitation cycle:** Same as the second cycle, but pull the sheet from

the left. Most important: Never drag the sheets over the edges of the tray. If the softened emulsion makes contact with the lip of the tray severe scratches can result.

### Into the Developer

After the prewash remove the sheets one at a time and place them into the developer tray. If you are using the de-

velopment by inspection method the green inspection light should be placed about four feet from the tray. The light should be turned off until just before the film is inspected and turned off again immediately after completion of the inspection.

The first inspection should be made about halfway through the development cycle. A second and third inspection can be made one to two minutes after the first, depending on the status of the negative. By using the green light only briefly it is possible to examine the status of development without fogging the film. Although film is sensitive to green light, the human eye is so sensitive to the green wavelengths that it is possible to use a very dim light source and still see the developing film. Nightvision lenses use green monitors for the same reason.

When starting out with the inspection method it is best to develop by timing the development. As you inspect the film during development you will begin to develop a feel for what the film should look like under the green light at different stages of development. Over a period of time you will be able to tailor the development by judging

whether the film should be left in the tray for the entire recommended time or placed in the stop tray earlier.

After development is finished, the sheets are placed back into the prewash tray. At this point you should have water flowing through this tray. The flow rate should be high enough to keep the tray filled, which will also allow the water to act as a developer stop, removing the need for an acid stop bath. Once all the sheets have been transferred from the developer tray into the water stop, shuffle them once to halt development then transfer them one by one into the fixer tray.

Continue shuffling the negatives using the left, front right pattern described for developer agitation. After about three minutes in the fixer you can turn on the white lights.

If you are developing in PMK pyro you should place the negatives back into the used developer after fixing and agitate for about two minutes. This helps to reduce staining.

Finally, the negatives go back into the middle tray for washing. Shuffling through the pile continuously while making about 10 changes of the wash water will remove residual hypo.

Processing the big negatives may seem daunting at first, but after you have processed a few batches of 20x24" film you will find that 12x20" becomes easy to handle and 8x10" seems like a postage stamp!

Burkhardt Kiegeland has been a writer, fine art photographer and printer in Germany for 40 years. He has written two bestselling instruction books on photography and the darkroom that have been translated into several European languages. He is a regular contributor to the German magazine *SchwarzWeiss* (Monochrome, literally translates as "Black/White") on film processing, fine printing and the non-silver processes. He is chairman and technical director of Lotus View Camera. The Lotus view camera was designed by based on his practical experience working in the field. ■



# PHOTO HINTS

BY STEPHEN PETERSON

## Have a camera that doesn't have a film box end holder to identify the film you have loaded?

I do — my Pentax 67. I added an approximately one-inch square Velcro loop material with adhesive backing to the side of the mirror box. The Velcro material is available at most general-purpose stores in the inch-square size or in longer strips or rolls. Find a place on your camera to attach the loop piece that doesn't interfere with camera operation. Attach the hook section to the film box end flap that identifies the film type and exposure size. The box end may be cut down to make it smaller or you can cut a small piece of stiff plastic material and write the relevant information on it with a water-proof marker for more permanence. The film box ends that you regularly use can be stored (saved) between uses for the next time you load that film. The Velcro fixture makes it easy to remember which film the camera contains.

**Store your camera with batteries in place too long?** Corroded battery contacts can be cleaned with a cotton swab moistened with isopropyl alcohol. Feel free to use multiple swabs to remove the chemical compounds that have leaked out of the battery. If the battery contacts have been corroded a pencil eraser (white ink type is best) can be used to remove (erase) the oxidized metal. The contacts may have to be replaced but you can salvage them for additional photographs.

**Ries tripods are coveted by many photographers as wood absorbs vibrations and is warm to touch in cold weather.** My Ries legs, however, have the nasty habit of banging together when the tripod is folded in the back of the car, especially on back-country roads. Some photographers have used heavy-duty rubber bands (some fabricated out

of an inner-tube strip tied end to end) to hold the legs together and prevent banging. Another solution that works is to buy adhesive felt pads found in stores (to place under vases, etc.) and adhere them to the metal lower leg clamps where the clamps bang together. The pads absorb the impact of the legs vibrating due to vehicle motion. Only three pads are needed if placed properly.

**Metal tripods are economical and durable, but the legs can be painful to handle when cold.** Tripod leg covers are available, but PVC heat shrink tubing available at electronic supply stores can help insulate the metal from your hands. The tubing isn't exactly cheap and comes in four-foot long sections. Pick a color that suits you (several are available) and disassemble the legs of your tripod to install over the upper (top) leg sections. The tubing doesn't shrink lengthwise but only in diameter. Cut the length slightly generous and trim after installation. The tubing is slipped over the leg section and shrunk by heating with a hair dryer on high heat. Carefully work around the tubing and then from one end to the other. The tubing makes a nice gripping surface and helps protect the leg sections from abrasion.

**For those of you who use 4x5 (or larger) film hangers to develop sheet film, short sections of rubber surgical tubing can come the rescue.** N-1, N, N+1, etc., developments (or different films) can be identified in the dark by sliding rubber surgical tubing (or other type) over the hanger wing or arm that supports the hanger in the tank. No tubing might signify N-1 development, one on one arm N development, one on each hanger arm N+1 development, two on one side film X, etc. Make your own

coding system and stick to it. In the dark it is easy to feel the tubing and select the film-holder for removal from the developer at the appropriate time. In this regard, I use my enlarger timer as the film development timer. Place the timer far away and below the top of the developer tank to minimize any potential fogging from the red LEDs. I enter the time for maximum development and remove the holders at the appropriate decremented time.

Readers are invited to submit photo hints for publication. Contributors will receive credit for their hints. Please send to Photo Hints, P.O. Box 845, Crestone, Colorado 81131 USA or email to: [pvedit@fone.net](mailto:pvedit@fone.net).



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## ARTIST'S STATEMENT

# LES MCLEAN

*My photography is concerned with a communication of ideas, ideals, emotions, memories and the myriad of life's events and experiences.*

Landscape photography was the vehicle I chose to use in the early and formative years of the mid-70s. To capture light, coupled with the energy of the landscape was my aim when I explored favourite places in the English and American wilderness. Working in black-and-white I slowly learned to control its tonal range and contrast. Finally, I began to achieve my dream

of expressing my thoughts and feelings in the form of black-and-white prints. My influences included photographers such as Edward Weston and Paul Caponigro as well as Mark Rothko, the American painter, famous for his huge minimalist paintings.

Initially, I gratefully captured on film "magic moment" when the light, energy and other elements in the land-

scape conspired to present me with compelling photographic material. Then, making the fine print in my darkroom, where the delicate nuances of black, white and grey excited me as they appeared in the relative gloom of the safelight, became as pleasurable as the feelings experienced at the time of making the exposure. To this day I can-

*continued on page 58*

LES MCLEAN



LES MCLEAN





LES MCLEAN





## LES MCLEAN

*continued from page 53*

not decide which part of photography I enjoy most — making the exposure or making the print.

My photography began to change in the mid 80's when I realised that a series of images was perhaps stronger than a single "magic moment". Putting together the story of the evolution of the landscape became a short term obsession, before I realised that the end of my love affair with the landscape had arrived. I felt the need to explore new aspects of photography and began telling the story of mundane everyday events with my camera.

As a photographer I felt a responsibility to report and record changes in communities and address the deeper political issues which affect all our lives. This photographic involvement took me into social situations where I began to learn about and understand the problems of those people that I began to photograph.

My experience of photographing the coal miners of my hometown as their industry died, and the emotive year spent photographing the Children of North and West Belfast have left me with happy memories as well as deep emotional scars. In a way, the years of photographing the light and energy of the landscape left me ill-prepared for the trauma I felt when I came face-to-face with real life. Yet, the absolute joy of making landscape photographs seemed to sensitise the spirit in readiness for my future photographic endeavours. It seems a strange contradiction.

My obsession and love affair with photography has given me an ability to look, see and capture light and energy in the landscape, and to tell the sad and happy stories of people who have passed in and out of my life. As I currently search for new and emotive stories of life to capture with my camera I find myself again drawn to the solitude

of making landscape photographs. This time I am exploring the use of modern ultra fast film stock to introduce a degree of impressionism into my image making. It seems that another interesting and stimulating turn in my photographic journey is urging me to look back down a previously travelled road. This to me is the joy of photography. I am happy to allow this compelling obsession with photographic exploration to take me wherever it chooses to go. In doing so I am convinced that I will not only continue to learn more about seeing and making photographs, but also about life itself.

Photography has directly changed me and made me see the insignificance of one man's time on this earth. The black-and-white photographic image is a very powerful means of expression. The mind games that the serious photographer must experience are, arguably, even more powerful and life changing.

## PERSONAL STUFF

I am a self-taught freelance photographer, printer, author and teacher based near the Scottish border in northern England. My interest in the arts started in the 50s when I left school to play in a rock'n roll band and pursue a career in music. In 1976, I bought a camera and made my first black-and-white print and have been hooked ever since. In 1979, I gave up music to concentrate on making photographs. My first workshop in 1982, led by John Blakemore, an English fine art photographer, convinced me that I had to pursue a career in photography.

I use 4x5, 645 and 35mm formats, my favourite camera being a Nikon F90x. I tend to favour the 20mm lens for it allows me to get really close to the subject which often creates presence and tension in the final image. In my darkroom I use a Zone VI Cold Cathode VC Enlarger and prefer to use the f-stop method of timing when printing. All my fine prints are made using fibre paper. I use Ilford Warmtone, Oriental Seagull and a dwindling supply of Kodak Ektalure. ■

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### New Beseler Color Kits

Anyone who processes color film at home should be pleased to hear about Charles Beseler Company's partnership with Trebla Chemical, a manufacturer of high quality home color processing chemistry.

Offered under the name *Color by Beseler*, the line of processing kits will feature liquid concentrates that offer easy mixing and the increased safety which comes from mixing without powder residue being inhaled.

The kits are intended for use in the home darkroom, classroom or small business. Used in these applications they will provide excellent color, convenience and value.

Long known for its innovations in commercial color processing, Trebla brings a new level of quality control as well as the highest standards in the industry in manufacturing tolerance. The new color chemistry kits will be kept to within one percent or less tolerance in sensitometric testing providing the user with unparalleled reliability and control.

For more information, or to locate a local dealer you can contact Beseler at 1-800-Beseler-1-331, that is 1-800-237-3537-1-331.

### Kodak Polymax Surface Sampler

Been wondering which Kodak Polymax II RC surface is right for you? Kodak has created a new product that will help you decide. The new *threesurface sample* pack includes 30 sheets of 8x10 paper, 10 sheets each of Polymax luster (E surface), glossy (F surface) and matte

(N surface). Suggested retail price of the three-surface sampler is \$16.95.

Polymax is a fast, variable contrast, resin-coated paper with a neutral image tone and compatibility with both tray and machine processing. The medium-weight paper is suited to a variety of applications including advertising, commercial work and military photography. It is also great for proofing or printing your latest efforts in the fine-art realm.

For more information about the Polymax sampler or any of Kodak's other fine products see their web site at: [www.Kodak.com/go/professional](http://www.Kodak.com/go/professional)

(Kodak, Kodak Professional, and Polymax are trademarks.)

### Ilford's New Cooltone Paper

First seen at the Photo Marketing Association show this year, the new *Ilford Cooltone Multigrade RC* paper will be a welcome addition to many darkrooms. After conducting extensive market research, Ilford found a need for



a paper with cool tones and created *Cooltone* to fill this need.

The paper is offered in both glossy and pearl surfaces. It employs the same advanced silver crystal technology that help to distinguish the Multigrade FB and RC Warmtone.

While offering a range of tones similar to other Ilford Multigrade materials, the new paper offers a base tint, crystal size and hardness level that will compliment the warmer toned papers in their line. The qualities of

the paper make it an excellent choice for commercial prints, reproduction prints and any application where increased sharpness and a cooler tone are desirable.

In creating this paper, Ilford calls on 120 years of experience in creating top quality papers for the darkroom. Watch for a review of *Cooltone* in an upcoming issue.


For more information on *Cooltone* paper, and the entire line of Ilford's fine black-and-white products, point your web browser to: [www.ilford.com](http://www.ilford.com) or visit your local darkroom supply dealer.

### Schneider Optics buys Century Precision Optics

Most of our readers will immediately recognize the name Schneider Optics as one of the premier providers of quality optics. As the U.S. subsidiary of Schneider Kreuznach, the acclaimed German lens manufacturer, the company has provided generations of large format photographers with quality optics at competitive prices.

Century Precision Optics has long provided similar quality optics for the television and movie industries. Century's lenses and filters have been used in the filming of many classic and contemporary motion pictures. In fact, Century was given the Academy Award for Technical Achievement in 1992.

The acquisition of Century will allow Schneider to bring over 87 years of experience and research to help create even better and more innovative products for the Century line.

For more information about Schneider, look at their website at: [www.schneideroptics.com](http://www.schneideroptics.com) or contact them at Schneider Optics, Inc., 285 Oser Avenue, Hauppauge, New York 11778 USA; by telephone: 631 761-5000 fax: 631 761-5090 or by email at [info@schneideroptics.com](mailto:info@schneideroptics.com). You can visit Century Optics' website at: [www.centuryoptics.com](http://www.centuryoptics.com) 

## ALTERNATIVE GOES MAINSTREAM

*Eric Neilsen, continued from page 38*

can also be used to produce beautiful silver-gelatin prints.

I asked David what inspired him to design a special paper for bromoil. He explained that the bromoil process requires the use of silver-gelatin paper that is used as a matrix to hold the image for later manipulation. He went on to say that, "Although I can ink up just about any black-and-white paper on the market, including RC paper, I've always had a desire to have a special bromoil paper made that would be superior to all other paper." One of the key aspects of a paper's success is the softness of the gelatin layer and its ability to hold the inks. "I knew from experience over the years that obtaining a paper with a soft emulsion would produce the exquisite detail that I always tried to obtain in making the print."

"Rather than keep this paper for my personal use, I decided in the late 1990s to share it with some gifted photographer friends. This opened up



Windmill, Sutter Butte, Northern California, 4x5 FP4+, sepia and selenium toned. © 1994 ERIC NEISEN

a new world for them in black-and-white printing. Later, I provided the paper to my workshop students. They were thrilled with the results that they produced compared with the modern papers they had been inking up."

There are a number of papers available for silver printing which are also used by bromoil printers such as Agfa 118 MC fine grain matte, Ilford MG IV matte finish, and several by Luminos. There are also others available specifically for bromoil printing from Kentmere, Caswell, and Bergger. However, David feels that, "There is no equal when using amidol developer with this paper. The gradation of tone is phenomenal and the shadow detail holds beautifully. The dead matte surface gives me the freedom to ink up a bromoil with a very photographic rendition or create an etching-like quality, depending on my interpretation of the subject. This paper also transfers with greater ease than conventional papers."

My personal experience with the bromoil process is limited to having watched portions of a bromoil workshop taught by David at the Photographers' Formulary Workshops in

Montana, while I was running the lab during the summer of 1999. While all the participants at the Formulary Workshops produced prints that had good detail and texture, I was interested to see if his paper would perform well for traditional printing and toning. I was very pleased to find that this paper does produce prints with exquisite detail.

To process Mr. Lewis' paper I used Ansco 120 and 130 formulas, from *The Darkroom Cookbook* (Focal Press) as well as an amidol developer formulated per David's recommendation. All three produced prints that would please nearly anyone.

I like to use a slight sepia tone or a light to medium selenium tone on my prints for both archival reasons and color enhancement. For this reason, the test prints were toned using Maco odorless sepia toner and Maco selenium toner. I also use a sepia formula from *The Darkroom Cookbook* which has become my standard for use with variable contrast papers and several variations. I found that this paper tones beautifully.

I worked with 35mm, 120, and 4x5 negatives that ranged from a bit flat to excessively contrasty for this paper.

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## ALTERNATIVE GOES MAINSTREAM

The negatives were from Ilford Delta 400, HP5+, and FP4+ films. I included two pyro negatives — one PMK and the other ABC+ (aka Rollo Pyro). I also toned several prints much more intensely than normal. As a result, I got a bit of split toning with several images.

I am particularly pleased with the surface of this paper. The images have great depth and tone. While many papers list the surface as matte, they more closely resemble a frost, placing a haze on the print. The matte surface of this paper allows the viewer to see into the paper, much more like a platinum print. Another paper with a similar surface is Forté Warmtone Polytone Semi-matte.

I decided to put Mr. Lewis' paper to the test on some hand colored prints, both with pencils and Marshall's Oils. It has been years since I have found a paper that has excited me like this one for hand coloring.

There are two drawbacks to the paper. The first is that, as of this writing, it is only available in a normal grade. However, there are plans to produce additional grades in the future. The other is the relatively small range of paper sizes available. It is currently limited to 8x10" and 12x16".

Mr. Lewis' paper is currently available through the Photographers' Formulary. It is priced at \$21.95 for a 25-sheet package.

If you are looking for an elegant matte surface in a graded paper, one that responds well to amidol, toning, and hand coloring, or if you are using the bromoil transfer process, I highly recommend that you try David Lewis' Bromoil Paper.

Eric Neilsen has been actively involved in photography since 1978. He offers workshops in platinum/palladium printing at his studio in Dallas. His personal art work covers platinum/palladium, color prints in both Ilfochrome and the RA4 process prints, and silver gelatin. Eric Neilsen, 4101 Commerce Street, Suite 9, Dallas, Texas USA 75226; tel: 214-827-8301; info@ericneilsenphotography.com www.ericneilsenphotography.com. 📧



El Dorado Store, Vallecitos, New Mexico, 4x5 FP4+, sepia toned. © 1994 ERIC NEISEN

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## READER'S FORUM

Letters, continued from page 6  
by Dick Sullivan, of *Bostick & Sullivan*, that even though pyrogallic acid is made by heating gallic acid, they are not the same when it comes to developing negatives. Do not try to substitute the less expensive gallic acid for pyrogallic acid (pyro) in developing formulas. Not to be outdone by Dad, it was further brought to my attention by Kevin Sullivan, that *Bostick & Sullivan* is a major source of photographic chemicals and formulas for the photographer, both silver and alternative processes. Their address is Box 16639, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87506 USA; tel: 505-474-0890 fax: 505-474-2857; e-mail: richard@bostick-sullivan.com.  
— Steve Anshell, Senior Editor

## Critic-al Success

I recently received the first issue of *Photovision* and I've read it thoroughly. I like the idea that your magazine contains no digital images; further, I like

the content. I found the articles on photo history and philosophy to be both helpful and instructive. The portfolios were reproduced well. Henry Gilpin's images were particularly elegant. I thought the critique section was very good and useful; it seems that section sets you apart from the other standard journals such as *View Camera*, *Photo Techniques*, and *Lenswork*. The Gilpin interview was fine but it did not go into the depth that Mr. Gilpin deserves. I was left wanting to know more about this photographic icon. Overall, I think your first effort was a fine one and I will certainly support this venture. Best regards,

— W.J. Head, Morgantown, WV

## No Stale Digital

Your magazine appears to be a breath of fresh air in this stale new digital world. I sincerely hope you succeed. I love traditional photography, especially black-and-white. Although I shoot mostly 35mm, I occasionally shoot 4x5 and 120 format. Thank you.

— Larry Otto

## Cutting Up

Thank you for the copy of *Photovision* — great stuff!! Besides the articles being excellent, the image quality of the photos is outstanding. I almost want to cut up the issue and mount the images on my wall. I'll be sending my subscription fee along shortly. I'm already looking forward to the next issue of *Photovision*.

— John Newton

## Check's in the Mail

Congratulations on your latest endeavor. The magazine looks like a winner. I will have my check in the mail early next week. It's nice to know some people feel the same as I do toward computerized images and that there are still some of us who prefer the feel of an enlarger handle over that of a mouse.

— Carl Maier

## Go Ahead and Shout

I just had to let you know how happy I was to receive the premier

## PHOTOVISION

PHOTOVISION: Art & Technique  
Volume 1, Number 2

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Manuscript and photography contributions are welcomed, but please query first with a brief written description of the work and an idea for its presentation. Queries may be addressed by mail to: PHOTOVISION, Attn: Query, 233 Sweetgrass Overlook, P.O. Box 845, Crestone, Colorado 81131 USA; by email to: pvedit@fone.net

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READER'S FORUM

edition of *Photovision*. When I read your editor's page and his decision on digital photos, I wanted to shout, "Hooray!" Finally, someone who sees things as I do. I am past President of a photo organization called the PFLI (Photo Federation of Long Island). We have about 1,000 members. I will tell all I can about your fine magazine.

— [name illegible]

Swallowed Up

I still miss *Camera & Darkroom*, which *Outdoor Photographer* swallowed in 1995, if I remember correctly. There ought to be many of us who appreciate photo magazines like PV and C&D, and can do without the digital stuff. I enjoyed this issue and am looking forward to the next one. I wish you success in your new venture, and will recommend PV to my friends and acquaintances. Thanks again and Good Luck!

— Dieter Sander, Hotchkiss, CO

Leftover Dollars

Received a complimentary copy of a new magazine — *Photovision*. OK, now what's this all about? I take a look and find it's about traditional art photography — HUH? My check will be going out today!

Beautiful magazine, good articles and a committment to not do pixels — love it! And, it's easy to subscribe now, I have those leftover dollars from the non-renewed subscriptions that no longer carry my medium.

— Jerry Komassa

Worth the Wait

Congrats on this new magazine. Very nice indeed. Is this the magazine I pre-subscribed to maybe over a year ago? If so, it was certainly worth the wait. I shared my copy of your premier issue with my photography students and they loved it.

— Ray Hale, Gainesville, FL

More Kudos!

First class and just what I've been looking for. I'll subscribe and wish you the best, artistically and financially.

— Howard Singer

azine. Issue #1 is terrific.

— William McEwen, Arlington, TX

*Photovision* is a beautiful magazine and your articles were so instructional. We all wish you huge success on your venture.

— Nancy and Ralph Reimann, Mission Viejo, CA

I am tickled pink to see a magazine devoted to real photography.

— Fred Salomon, Pensacola, FL

Send your queries, critiques and comments to Reader's Forum, PHOTOVISION, P.O. Box 845, Crestone, Colorado 81131 USA or submit them via email to pvedit@fone.net. Remember to include your name and address. We reserve the right to edit letters for brevity and clarity. ✎

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# CAMERA VIEWS

## Bare Bones Vintage

BY PAUL LEWIS

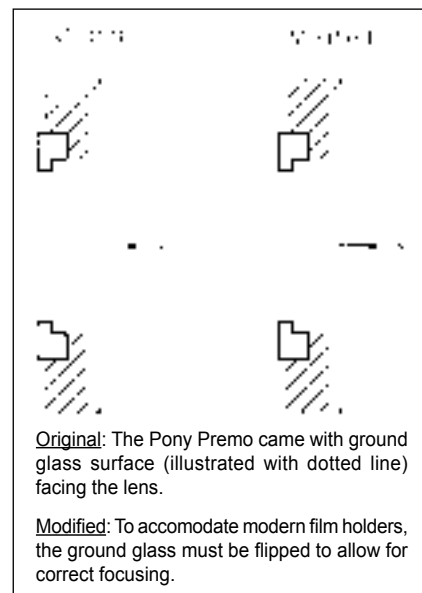


Vintage Pony Premo  
No. 3 Plate Camera

With all the options of large format equipment available today, it's easy to get caught up in the best, the fastest — the most expensive. It is worthwhile stepping back sometimes and trying the minimum. This is one example, an old Pony Premo No.3 plate camera with a minimum of movements, modified to use modern sheet film and a Taylor, Taylor & Hobson Cooke Anastigmat f/6.3 162mm that came off a Kodak 3A folder. This is nothing fancy, just the bare bones. Portraiture and some landscapes do not require a lot of camera movements and a good piece of glass will do well, even if it comes from humble beginnings.

The major modification that needed to be done on this camera was to adjust the ground glass so that it was the same distance from the lens as the film would be in a sheet film holder. The ANSI standard depth for 4x5 sheet film holders is 0.197" plus or minus 0.007". The quick and dirty solution is to flip the ground glass in the back of a plate camera, so that the matte side is on the outside. This usually works, but the focusing must be checked with a focus test. I ended up adding a 1mm

(0.04") shim to bring mine up to the right distance, because my ground glass was a little thinner than most. That's it. All those wonderful plate cameras that have been languishing on the shelf or in closets can come out. Gordon Hutchings, the creator of PMK developer, used a Pony Premo as a light field camera, in the sixties. He found his at a flea market



**Original:** The Pony Premo came with ground glass surface (illustrated with dotted line) facing the lens.

**Modified:** To accommodate modern film holders, the ground glass must be flipped to allow for correct focusing.

Modification of ground glass  
placement for modern film holders



Bausch and Lomb Rapid Rectilinear in a pneumatic Victor shutter.

for a couple of dollars in the late fifties. The original lens and shutter were not working, so he replaced them with a 6" f/6.3 Tessar in a Kodak Ball Bearing shutter and used it as his backpacking field camera. They are ideal. The 4x5 Pony Premo weighs just under two pounds — five film holders weigh more.

There are some restrictions using such a simple view camera. My Pony has a single extension focusing rail, with no geared adjustment. So, it is limited to a normal lens, but it will focus down to four feet. I was initially concerned that it didn't have geared focussing, but it works well. It has about an inch of front rise and the back allows for seven degrees forward and five degrees backward tilt. Mine is an newer model than Gordon's. He added the back movements, with a little brass and a couple of battery clamps.

My choice of lens for this camera



This portrait detail illustrates the image quality of the Cooke triplet lens on the Pony Premo. It is a little soft because I exposed it at f/8 — nearly wide open on the f/6.8 lens. I was limited by the light and did not want to shoot slower than 1/2 second.

might seem odd considering all the choices available. There are a lot of really good vintage lenses, but I chose this one for a reason. I like the images I get with this triplet. Dennis Taylor designed the Cooke Triplet in 1893. Taylor, Taylor & Hobson (no relation to Dennis Taylor) manufactured the lens and named it the Cooke Triplet, out of respect for Dennis' employer, Cooke of York. Since the early 1900s just about every lens maker has produced them, but not all triplets are created equal. There are some that make better paperweights than lenses, but I have been pleased with the results of this Cooke

Anastigmat and Zeiss Novars. Not that I don't like more corrected lens, but there is more to an image than just high resolution and the lowest amount of aberrations mathematically possible. How a lens deals with tonality, the character of it's sharpness and 'bokeh'\* are my criteria. I think that cameras are to take pictures with; they're not trophies to be put on display and boasted about ... but that's me. I know it's not everyone's opinion.

I mentioned a focus test at the beginning. A very simple but effective one is done with playing cards, held up by clothes pins on a table. Stagger them

\*Bokeh is a Japanese word for the image that the lens produces outside of the plane of sharp focus. Different lens types produce different kinds of bokeh; some smooth and some very harsh and distracting. It is unnoticed by most because they only pay attention to what is in focus in the picture. It is a subtle, but important factor in our reaction to an image.



## CAMERA VIEWS

six inches apart, at an angle from the camera's point of view. Set the camera six feet from the middle card. Shoot wide open for the minimum depth of field. The three cards in front and three cards behind are enough to tell you how accurate your focusing is. If the center card is not the sharpest, then you adjust the ground glass offset. This test gave me a very interesting result with the original lens that came with my Pony. It was a Bausch & Lomb Rapid Rectilinear in a pneumatic Victor shutter. It was very pretty and it worked well for a while. Unfortunately, the shutter became erratic and didn't give consistent speeds. Well, it is a hundred years old. I understood that it had just gotten tired. It was the lens that was the mystery. When I developed the test negative, it seemed, at first, that it was focusing properly. The center card was in focus, but so was the left hand corner of the table nearest the camera! This is not a general purpose lens. I would have to arrange my shots so that I had anybody on my left would have to stand really

close. The lens elements do not look misshapen and the lenses are square in their mounts. All I can figure is that the glass is not homogeneous and that one side of one of the elements that has higher refractive index than the other. They didn't stir the mix well enough when they made the glass. It's a very nice paper weight now.

I want to add a cautionary note about compound shutters. They cannot be dunked in solvent. The aperture blades are made of paper. They do not take kindly to getting wet and they don't work well after that! If your shutter is slow and doesn't begin to function normally after being fired a dozen times at every speed, have it cleaned and lubricated by a camera tech. Regular use (at least every six months) keeps these shutters happy.

So, get that old plate camera out of the closet and try taking some pictures with a bare bones vintage camera.

Paul Lewis is a photographer, photochemist and metalsmith living in Canada. He enjoys the pleasures of classic cameras and infrared

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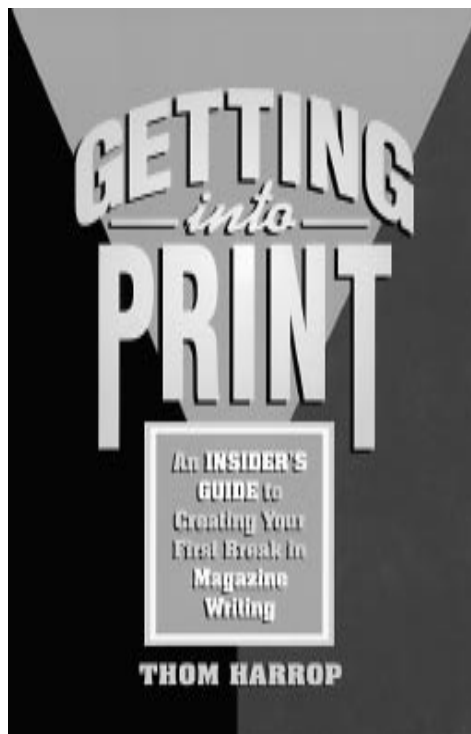
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## IN MY OPINION

*Hirsch, continued from page 9*

The vast majority of digital images continue to be reworkings of past strategies that do not articulate any new ideas. Manufacturers promote the fantasy that all it takes to be an artist is just a few clicks of a mouse or applying a preprogrammed Fresco or Van Gogh filter. The challenge remains open: to find a native syntax for digital imaging. At the moment, this appears to be one that encourages the hybridization and commingling of mediums.


On the practice side, having a tangible negative allows one to revisit the original vision without worrying about changing technology. One could still take a negative that William Henry Fox Talbot made to produce his first photographic book, *The Pencil of Nature* (1843 - 1846), and make a print from it today. In 150 years will there be a convenient way for people to view images saved only as digital files? Or will they be technically obsolete and share

the fate of the 8-track audio tape or the Beta video system of having data that most people can no longer access?

One does not have to be a Luddite to continue making analog prints. One reason to keep working in a variety of analog processes is that digital imaging tends to physically remove the maker from the photographic process. This is not a romantic notion or a longing of nostalgia for the ways of the past. What often lost is the pure joy of the atmospheric experience of being alone in a special dark room with an orange glowing light. The exhilaration of being physically creative as your body and mind work together to produce a tangible image. The making of an analog photograph is a haptic experience that does not occur while one is seated in a task chair. The smell of chemicals, the sensory experiences of running water as an image emerges in the developing tray from a white nothingness. A silver-based photograph never looks

better than when viewed when it is glistening wet from its final wash. And regardless of how long one has been making prints in the darkroom, there is still that small thrill that your photograph "has come out" and now can have a life of its own.

*To be continued...*

Robert Hirsch's latest book *Seizing the Light: A History of Photography* is published by McGraw-Hill ([www.mhhe.com/museum](http://www.mhhe.com/museum)). Hirsch is also the author of *Exploring Color Photography*, third edition, also published by McGraw-Hill. He is currently working on a revised and expanded second edition of *Photographic Possibilities: The Expressive Use of Ideas, Materials, and Processes* published by Focal Press ([www.focalpress.com](http://www.focalpress.com)). He is on the art faculty of the State University of New York at Buffalo and will be teaching History of Photography this fall. His photographs were most recently shown at Stefan Stux Gallery in New York. They are also featured in the current *Light Work Annual/Contact Sheet 107* with an essay by Jeffrey Hoone, Director of Light Work, Syracuse, New York ([www.lighwork.org](http://www.lighwork.org)). 

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Each month in this section we will bring you news of gallery exhibits, workshops and other events we think will be of interest to readers in various regions of the U.S. and abroad. Please let us know if you hear about a good workshop, museum or gallery show or other photo related event and we will pass the best along. Mail information to us at PHOTOVISION, P.O. Box 845, Crestone, Colorado 81131 USA, or send us email at pvedit@fone.net. 📧

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# CRITIQUE

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Each issue, Photovision turns its critical attention upon a reader-submitted photograph. All genres and technical approaches are welcome: monochrome or color, traditional or cutting-edge. Give us your best, and we'll do our best to apply rigorous but fair standards in the interest of exploring that sometimes-mystifying, always-subjective animal known as photographic composition.

This month's photo, by Howard Singer of Amherst, Massachusetts, is a study in the human condition. As Singer was out walking one day with his son he came upon this protest. He quickly headed home and returned with a camera making several photos of this group of people who were passionately putting forth their view on arms control. We will review the image based on five criteria: technical quality; lighting and depth; figure-ground relationship; composition and line, and concept.

**Technical Quality** — The photo is sharp and the main subject is both well lit and focused. Depth-of-field is sufficient to provide detail in the main subject while keeping background material from becoming distracting. The print also displays a good range of tones from nearly paper base white (in the pages the woman is offering) to what appears to be a D-Max black in the spokes of the wheelchair. The print was either made from a pristine negative or very well spotted and shows no distracting surface features.

**Lighting and Depth** — The ambient lighting in the image appears to be flat and shadowless. When working on this type of reportage it is often preferable to work without flash or reflectors as

the subjects can range from less than cooperative to outright hostile. In this image the lighting supports the idea of protest by contributing a somewhat gray mood. In addition, the inherently low contrast of the lighting allows detail in the face of the older woman to come through without deep shadows that would have lessened the effect in more contrasty lighting. The illusion of depth is well-handled by the inclusion of background material that is both out of focus and darker than the foreground subject. Both of these qualities contribute to the idea of distance from the foreground subject, thereby creating a feeling of depth.

**Figure/Ground Relationship** — Does the subject separate from the background? As we discussed in lighting terms the foreground material clearly shows depth from the house in the background. It seems less than clear that the important foreground elements separate from one another. The expression on the woman's face attracts our attention and becomes the focus of the photo. The one problem with the image seems to be the framing, which places the woman's face in a position that allows other, less important foreground elements to compete strongly for visual attention.

**Composition and Line** — The photo breaks a few basic rules of composition. The woman's face, which most would see as the most important theme in the image, is placed a bit too centrally in the vertical orientation, and a bit too far from the golden mean section line, or rule of thirds line which runs roughly between the wheel of the wheelchair and the standard holding the banner. The line created by the woman's arm is a great leading line and would create a very strong compositional element were it given a bit more visual weight by virtue of being placed more centrally in the image.

**Concept** — It is in its concept that this photo really stands out. While certain compositional elements may conspire to blur the message, the woman's facial expression, the banner and the flyer she is offering all strongly support a consistent statement about weapons of war and dedication to a cause. From the Birkenstocks and skirt of the hidden protester to the words of the sign and everything else in the frame, the idea calls for our attention— whichever side of the arms debate one supports. Better subject placement might have helped clarify the image, but taken as a whole it is a fine example of reportage.

---

## ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER

— HOWARD SINGER is a 52-year-old who lives in Amherst, Massachusetts, and about a year ago discovered his passion for black-and-white photography and darkroom work. Early in his career, Howard received undergraduate degrees in English Literature and Economics, and a Master of Fine Arts in Theater Direction from Columbia. Along the way, he created a successful money management business and continues to work in that arena.

Last year he decided that darkroom

knowledge would be necessary in order for him to "see" more clearly through the camera. With a burst of energy, he built a darkroom, bought the necessary used equipment to go up to medium format and went to work. He quickly discovered that he had little interest in automation on the camera, and fell in love with a Rolleiflex 3.5 E, had it rebuilt and took a lot of pictures. He finds that pictures happen — he does not have to invent the scene. In a way, his vision right now with photography

is much like how he feels when directing a play: the moment is there — it's just a question of being able to let it happen.

The subject of the photo had an infirmity which made her speech difficult to understand, however, her devotion to the cause is forever recorded in this photo. Howard notes that in the darkroom, as this image became clear, he felt a great sense of emotion and the tears fell freely. ▶





# Samy's Camera

Southern California



Photo © Kayce Baker

"Wilton Theatre Ceiling, L.A."... as seen through a Wisner 4x5 Field Camera

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