

FOCUS

SCHENECTADY PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY NEWS

Volume 74

January 2005

Number 4

Rob O'Neil to Speak to Print Group

Ray C. Henrikson

On Wednesday, January 5, 2005, the Print Group will hear Rob O'Neil talk on "Projections". Since 1999 Rob has been an Assistant Professor of Art at the College of Saint Rose, Albany. His undergraduate experience at the University of Akron lead to a B.F.A. in photography and he earned an M.F.A. in cinema and photography from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

Since he arrived in the capital district, his work has been accepted in three Mohawk-Hudson Region Exhibitions and was recognized with awards in all three Regionals. In the 22nd Annual Photo Regional, at the Albany Center Gallery, his work received second place. His

Please see Rob O'Neil page 4

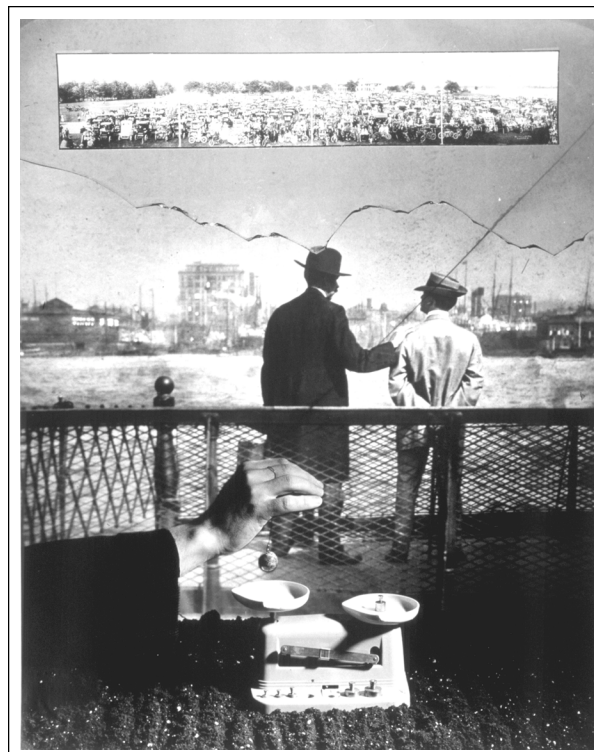


Photo by Rob O'Neil

Greg Yankosky: Social Change through Photography

By Amy Howansky

Photographs of children laboring in coal mines, pictures from war-time Vietnam, and images of men on jobs for the Depression-era *Works Project Administration* (WPA) all have one thing in common: they encourage social change. This was an inspirational force for photographer Greg Yankosky.

For a high school student during the mid 1960's, a primary source of entertainment and information was LIFE Magazine. Greg particularly remembers the images of Vietnam. He didn't just look at the photographs and then turn the page. Instead, he thought to himself: "How did the photographer interact with his surroundings? What is the photographer trying to do by showing this picture?"

Photography can make political points, and change people's views of the world.

Greg also points out the influence of photographer Lewis Hines. At the turn of the century, children worked long hours in tough conditions. Many children suffered from black lung disease from toiling in coal mines, and many others performed tedious, repetitive tasks in the manufacturing industry. Hines traveled the eastern United States taking photos of children at work. During this time, Teddy Roosevelt was the police chief in New York City, and he was also involved in the effort to improve labor conditions. Hell's Kitchen was an area of the city particularly known for its unsafe environment. Due to the efforts of

Please see Greg Yankosky page 3

Fine Art in the Age of Instant Gratification Digital

N. Sukumar

Does fine art photography have any place in the age of instant gratification digital? Many are those who would answer in the negative. Will the immense and growing popularity of digital technology prove to be the death knell of fine art photography? Does this art style have any future in a world awash with cheaply downloadable images? Or do digital techniques merely add another set of tools to the photographic arsenal of the artist? Over the ages, art has been valued by several criteria:

1. The time and labor required to create the artwork and the skill of the artist in the techniques employed, *i.e.* craftsmanship;
2. The rarity of the artwork and feasibility of replacement, *i.e.* supply-side market forces – thus limited editions and works by artists now dead have greater value;
3. Public appreciation of the artwork, *i.e.* market demand – which artists strive to maximize with critical appraisals, gallery showings and even stunts to increase visibility.



Photo by N. Sukumar

Digital technology is seen to impact factors 1 and 2 to the detriment of fine art photographers. Instant gratification digital greatly reduces the time and labor involved in the creation of a fine print. Many exquisite effects that a photographer of yore might have struggled with for hours in the darkroom can now be achieved relatively painlessly with mathematical filters in software such as Photoshop. True, this has raised the bar for a digital work of art, so that the digital darkroom artist still labors for hours or maybe days on the computer to create a single outstanding image. But this is not yet universally appreciated.

Replacement of a digital image is now almost trivial, while at the same time the archival properties of digital prints have not yet been established to universal satisfaction; so supply-side economics takes a hit! Many would by now object, and with reason, that the value of artwork

cannot – and should not – be judged on the basis of market forces alone. But read on...


What determines a viewer's appreciation of an image? This is, of course, very subjective and will form the starting point for our discussion on Fine Art Night, Jan. 26th. Among many factors, we can identify:

- The aesthetics of the image;
- Its technical qualities;
- The appeal of the story the artist is trying to convey through the image;
- The bond created between the artist and the viewer through the image.


We will examine and discuss both film-based and digital photography, trying to transcend distinctions of medium and subject matter, perhaps even combine them when we feel like (I will show examples of each), to consider what makes a fine art photograph different from the rest. The audience will be encouraged to come up with their own definitions and criteria. Perhaps shockingly, we may find that artwork is not created by the photographer in the camera or in the studio, but by the teamwork of the artist and the viewer in their minds.

How does a fine art photographer survive in the age of instant gratification digital? One way is by slowing down, by taking deliberate decisions, by exercising control. Paradoxically, another is by letting go, by freeing one's mind from left-brain technicalities, by surrendering to one's artistic, creative right brain instincts. Just as there is no single definition for art, no single criterion for beauty, there is likewise no one recipe that works for everyone. In the ultimate analysis, the artist survives by being true to oneself. The Fine Art Group will present two programs this year, exploring different approaches to fine art photography; leading with a digital presentation of my own (film, digital and mixed media) work on Jan. 26th, to be followed on Mar. 30th with a hand-coloring workshop by Kim Koza.

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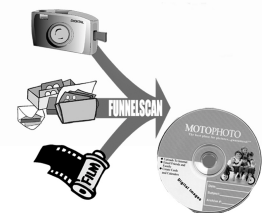
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Learn how to restore old photographs

Jeff Perkins, Asst. chair

On January 19th the Digital group will give you the basics, as well as some advanced tricks, on how to restore old photographs. Current photo editing programs are chock full of methods that allow one to easily repair faded, cracked and even torn images. We will review these techniques using Photoshop as our base program. Also, a restoration challenge will be e-mailed to those who want to try their hand at photo repair. Results will be reviewed at the February 16 Digital Group meeting.

Greg Yankosky

continued from page 1

Lewis Hines, and others like him, legislators passed new laws to protect workers, especially young ones. Greg says this example shows how photographs can "turn the public tide."

Greg has talked to high school students about the power of photography. Today's young, aspiring photographers might relate to the "public awareness" power of Iraqi prison pictures. It was in high school that Greg got his first camera, and also took a job in the darkroom at a

newspaper. Those experiences crystallized his future...he wanted to take photographs like the ones in LIFE Magazine.

After high school Greg joined a motion picture production company, making commercials for Price Chopper, and editing point-of-purchase films. Back then, everything was shot on film since video was just starting to come into its own. Interestingly, Greg also did black and white processing and commercial printing as an employee at the Black and White Pro Lab, originally in Troy, which was later purchased by Neil McGreevy and now exists in Albany as a full service photo lab.

Doing a stint as photographer for the New York Assembly helped Greg improve his photographic skills. Due to the photojournalistic nature of his assignments, Greg learned how to shoot quickly and consistently. The job was demanding because Greg had to process his own film and make his own prints, all on very tight deadlines. Most of the work was "mundane," but sometimes the political issues and visits by famous politicians livened up the job. In general, staff photographers could only stay a short time before burning out.

To supplement his income along the way, Greg did freelance photography that included: weddings, special events, and family portraits. At this time, the

photographic genre called "new journalism" became inspirational for him. Much like the Method Acting technique used by prominent Hollywood actors, or the "write-what-you-know" sentiment of famous novelists, the "new journalism" concept stresses immersion in the subject matter. Practitioners of these methods believe that the better you know your subject, the better you can portray the subject, whether it be by acting, writing, or photographing.

Photographer Danny Lyon popularized the technique of immersing himself in his subject matter when he joined a motorcycle group and spent years "on the road" so that he could accurately make images of the Hell's Angels. Greg describes Lyon's tactics as "dedication to his art." If a photographer is not ready to join a motorcycle gang for a few years, Greg still believes that the artist must have "a direct and honest relationship with the subject." For example, though some people may have a difficult time photographing their own community because they have seen it so many times that they are bored by it, Greg thinks it may be easier for a person to make images of his own neighborhood precisely *because* he has lived there a long time, and is familiar with the nuances of the place.

Photographer Freeman Patterson said something similar a few years ago at a

Please see Greg Yankosky page 4



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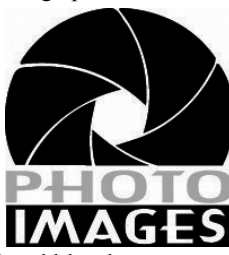


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Greg Yankosky

continued from page

workshop sponsored by the Schenectady Photographic Society. After a presentation of Patterson's work shot in Namibia, a workshop attendee asked the artist how amateurs were supposed to make beautiful images without access to exotic places. Patterson explained that our own homes and backyards were the best places to shoot since we were intimately connected to them. Patterson's next set of slides supported his answer beautifully with images of overripe bananas, stacks of blue jeans, and ice-encrusted leaves in his backyard.

Greg's backyard is several acres in Duanesburg, which he shares with his wife, Mary Ellen. He is currently working on a project in the hamlet of Quaker Street. (No, that is not a typo, folks. The village name really has "street" in it.) The community was founded in the 1700's by Quakers, but changed dramatically when Interstate 88 went through the area. Greg plans to interview every homeowner on the main street to chronicle what it was like before "progress" literally drove through the town.

When asked what he might do with photography in the future, Greg replied, "Well, I'm doing it now." He happily continued, explaining that what he does now IS what he always wanted to do in the future. For two to three months of the year, he and his wife take their RV camper

to the southwest where Greg adds to his photographic portfolio. Later, he sells the photographs to travel stock companies. He also produces images for websites and for home office décor items such as posters. Additionally, Greg sells his work at regional fine arts shows, and by word-of-mouth.

Though he uses a digital Nikon D-100, Greg claims, "I'm SO not a techno-geek!" He uses the digital darkroom for minimal manipulations, doing only what he would in a regular darkroom. However, Greg declares that it is "very exciting" to live now in the "golden age of photography" because he has the chance to see both film and digital technology at the same time.

No stranger to photo exhibitions, Greg has been a frequent contributor to the Photo Regional, and he has had one-man shows in Illinois, at Union College in Schenectady, and at Troy's former Rensselaer County Council for the Arts (RCCA). He served as a guest lecturer for a summer photography program at Russell Sage College, and has also taught classes at RCCA, SUNY Albany, and the Albany Academy for Girls.

Beside teaching and photographing, Greg enjoys running road races, and hiking in the Adirondacks. Hikers who have conquered the Adirondack's 46 highest peaks are nicknamed "46-ers." When asked if he was a "46-er," Greg laughed and said, "No, I'm a 3-er."

In his latest hobby, Greg continues linking photography with social change. While agreeing to give a presentation to the Schenectady Photographic Society, Greg learned that some members volunteer at the Landis Arboretum in Esperance, New York. Within seconds, he was enthusiastically asking permission to follow a tree-pruning team so that he could photograph their activities. Greg was only at the arboretum for about five minutes before he decided that photographing the pruning session was not enough...immersion into his subject matter was required. So up the tree he went, where he dangled precariously from ropes, and energetically sawed off dead branches. More impressively, he returned week after week to do more work. He has become the best tree-climbing-pruning-volunteer on the team, proving that photography can truly cause people to improve the world around them!

Please join us on Wednesday, January 12 at 7:30 for a wonderful program.

Rob O'Neil

continued from page 1

photographs have been seen in eleven solo exhibitions and in twenty-two group exhibitions.

Referring to Rob O'Neil's five images in the most recent Mohawk-Hudson Regional, Pablo Helguera in his juror essay said of Rob's work, "... presents a series of black and white photographs that show mysterious scenes related to scales, measurements, geographical exploration, and technology in general. These photos contain two main layers: a pair of hands in an activity that appears to respond to the images we see projected onto a wall. It is through them that we sense a dialogue"

The program on January 5th promises to be a view of the photographic experience seldom seen at the Schenectady Photographic Society.

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December Competition Results

Prints

The December print night was a critique program and there was no competition. This program was so well received, that the Board has decided to hold another critique next year for the slide group.

Fifty prints were entered for the judges David Lloyd and Mark Sweeney to evaluate. They gave very helpful critiques of each picture. It was an excellent learning experience for all those in attendance.

January will have two assigned topics

The print group had a special critique night in December in place of the regular meeting and competition. Therefore, the assigned topic for December, *Low Key Portraits*, will be held in January in addition to the January assigned topic, *Snapshots* and the regular color and monochrome competitions.

Each member may enter up to a total of three prints in competition. Two prints may be entered in one category and one in another or one print in each of three categories. For this competition only, one of the three does not have to be in monochrome.

Because the January assigned topic is *Snapshots*, snapshot size prints, ie. 4x6 will be accepted.



Schenectady Photographic Society
is a member of the
Photographic Society of America

Slides

General 34 Entries

* Jean Burton	Purple Mountains Majesty	1
Jeff Plant	The Ice Shark	2
Luba Ricket	Time to Leave	3
Jean Burton	High Prairie	4
David Lilac	Sunwall	5
Jeff Plant	Ice at North Hudson	HM
Ruby Gold	Autumn at the Crossing	HM
Connie F. Houde	Reflections	HM

Assigned The Color Blue 21 Entries

** Connie Bush	Blues	1
Jennifer Young	The Dance	2
David Lilac	Lakehill	3
Karl Becker	Blue Sky	HM
Connie F. Houde	The Blue - Red Guard	HM
Jeff Plant	Silver Trees - Blue Water	HM

Judge El-wise Noisette

Program Clifford Oliver Mealy / The Life of a New York State Parks Photographer

Winners Notes:

*Jean took this beautiful winner with a Canon EOS3, a 28-80 lens and Kodak Elite Chrome 100. She says "these are the mountains of Glacier National Park which the first rays of the sun turn this wonderful morning pink. We rose before dawn and had our cameras poised before 6 a.m."

**Connie hand held her Pentax ZX-7 with a Pentax 50mm lens and Fuji Sensia 400 film to take this photo early in the morning last October in Saratoga Springs near the corner of Henry and Phila Streets.

Correction:

The honorable mention winners in the November assigned category were inadvertently omitted from this column in last month's *Focus*. They are

Connie Bush	Dawn	HM
Howie Johannessen	Untitled	HM
Jean Burton	Going to the Sun Mountain	HM



Shooting in Snow

©Chuck DeLaney - NYI Dean

How do you go about taking photographs when it's actually snowing or sleeting? If it's just a few flakes, just keep your camera under your coat except when you shoot. Not long ago, we were outside photographing when a heavy snow squall hit. In a few seconds, the whole world was awash in swirling, blowing soggy snowflakes. This kind of heavy downfall can play havoc with the exposed parts of an SLR, particularly the highly electronic models where any moisture can snarl the all-important circuits that control all the camera's functions, as well as digital cameras.

Our advice is when it's really coming down, don't use your SLR unless you have it protected by a waterproof device such as the plastic-bag type housings made by Ewa. These handy gadgets are designed for snorkelers — you put your camera into the plastic bag and seal it. Your camera's lens is positioned so it "sees" through a clear optical glass filter. Your camera is protected from moisture by the plastic sack and the lens by the glass filter. We should note that these are fine for snowstorms as well as snorkeling. They aren't made for higher water pressure that scuba divers encounter at greater depths.

Another approach in snowy conditions is to use a waterproof point-and-shoot or even a waterproof single-use camera. The most recent single-use models put out by Kodak and Fuji have ISO 800 film and should be able to capture an image as long as it's not too dark.

Whether you're using a waterproof holder or a waterproof camera, you'll have to make sure that snowflakes or water droplets don't obscure the view of the lens. If necessary, wipe your lens with a dry, lint-free absorbent cloth. We use either a well-worn all-cotton t-shirt for this purpose, or a microfiber cleaning cloth.

With these simple precautions, you'll be able to take great photographs outdoors in cold weather. Cold weather offers exceptional opportunities for wonderful landscapes because of its crystal-clear air. So don't be daunted when the temperature drops into the Arctic zone. Just dress properly, take these few precautions, head outdoors, and get going!



An Article from the *British Journal of Photography*

David Hockney, Britain's most significant living artist, has offered the opinion that photography is a dying art form. The artist's view, as expressed in a newspaper interview, is that ease of manipulation has degraded the medium to such an extent that it can no longer be relied upon to deliver the truth.

Hockney is, perhaps, better placed than most to offer an informed view, having relied on photography for so much of his art and whose most famous works possess such a distinctive photographic quality. He argues that 'there is no need to believe a photograph made after a certain date because it won't be made in the way that Cartier-Bresson made his. He was the master of truthful photography. But you can't have photography like that again because we know that photographs can be made in different ways.'

Hockney, and by extension *The Guardian*, may think these views controversial and likely to spark a debate. They are not, and they won't. The only surprise in all this is the painter's naivety. How can he not know that various forms of post-capture manipulation were being perfected 50 years before Henri Cartier-Bresson was born; that notions of truth in photography are as subjective as truth in any art form; and that the 'debate' has been rumbling on, rather tediously, for a decade and more.

In fact, if Hockney - or anyone else - were to go to *BJP's* website, and thence to the Photographers Forum, they would discover that the most popular subject for photography students' dissertations is 'digital image manipulation and photojournalism.' Underpinning all this is confusion, quite possibly wilful, between veracious visual reportage and art photography. It is concerning the latter that Hockney really hits home; he says that art photography is 'dull.' Now that's a notion really worthy of debate.

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News You Can Use

We are on the big screen

SPS has a tray of slides showing at the Spectrum Theater on Delaware Ave in Albany. They will be shown before the main feature in theater #3 till about the beginning of February. The following people contributed slides to the show:

Jake Amsler
Frank Bumbardatore
Ken Deitcher
Sue Gersten
Ruby Gold
Bob Gough
Jennifer Harvey
Linda Heim
Ray Henrikson
Connie Frisbee Houde
Colleen Magai
Max Tiller

Photo Essay group makes plans for Jan. 26th

January 26 is our next photo essay night. We will be meeting in the back room while The Fine Arts group meets in the main meeting space. If you are planning to do a print or slide essay please bring in what you have prepared to-date. If it only is in the formative idea

stage let us know; if you are still searching for an idea — let us know. This is an opportunity to get some feedback and/or creative ideas. Jim Craner will be doing a short demonstration of the digital program he uses and how to put together a slide essay. If you are planning to use the SPS dissolve unit you must begin working with us at this point. Come and participate in the creative process of creating a print or slide essay.

Jim Gold wins award

Jim Gold received an honorable mention in the Clifton Park-Half Moon library's 10th annual juried Art Show in November.

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Ken Deitcher

kendeitch@aol.com



Jim Craner to hold matting and framing workshop

Jim Craner will hold a workshop one Saturday in January — participants will select the exact date. This one-day workshop will be held in his home/workshop in Niskayuna and will run from 9:30 to 4:00 p.m. The following will be covered in detail:

Cut blanks for backing and mats

Plan and cut single and double mat windows

Mount photos using three different techniques

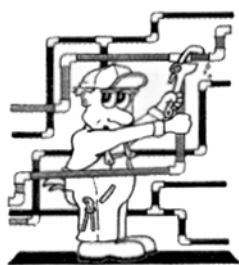
Buy glass and cut it accurately and safely using hand tools

Use Nielsen type metal frames.

The fee will be \$35.00 which includes morning beverages, a light lunch and materials.

Bill Allers has photo in exhibit

Bill Allers is exhibiting a photograph in the Saratoga County Arts Council Winter Solstice 2004 until January 7th, 2005.



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January Calendar

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Wednesday, January 5* | Print group: Projections / Rob O'Neil
Assigned: Snapshots
December assigned: Low key portraits (see page 5) |
| Wednesday, January 12 | Slide group: Social Change through Photography /
Greg Yankosky
Assigned: Organic |
| Wednesday, January 19 | Digital: Restoring old photographs / Jeff Perkins
Assigned: Digital blur and motion |
| Wednesday, January 26 | Fine Arts Group: Fine Art in the Age of Instant
Gratification Digital / N. Sukumar
Photo Essay group: discussion of photo essay
see page 7 for details |

Meetings are at 7:30 p.m.

*Board meetings are at 6:30 p.m.



The *Focus* is published nine times a year by the Schenectady Photographic Society. The organization meets each Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. from October through May to promote and present informative programs, activities and competitions in the photographic arts for photographers throughout the Capital District. Members range from novice to expert.

Annual dues are \$30.00 for individuals and families. The *Focus* newsletter is included in the membership dues. SPS meets at the First United Methodist Church, 603 State Street, Schenectady, New York. Parking and entrances are on Chapel Street, a one way street off Nott Terrace. Guests are welcome at all regular meetings.