

FOCUS

SCHENECTADY PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY NEWS

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“The Gunks” as you’ve never seen them – G. Steve Jordan

Bob Gough

“The aim of Art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance.” This quote by the philosopher Aristotle is used by photographer G. Steve Jordan to describe his approach to the art of photography, and in particular to the work that he has done over the last ten years or so in the Shawangunk mountains southeast of the Catskills.

Steve first visited the area as a rock climbing college student and found that the region had a particular beauty that appealed to him. “It’s a unique area that speaks to me personally,” Steve says, and that personal connection is quite evident in the photographs that he makes there. Each one displays not only a technical mastery of his craft, but also an intimate awareness of his surroundings that shows



Leaf in Ice by G. Steve Jordan

every sweeping vista and each splash of foliage and stand of trees with a clarity and vision that speaks from the heart.

Steve was interested in photography from a young age, but his interest was focused in high school when his father bought him a camera. With it he won a contest that was judged by a photographer

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Local artist to address slide group

Deyva Arthur

Being an eclectic artist, it is challenging to give a general statement of my work, which, as with my life, has changed over the 20 years I have been a photographer. With



*Photo Collage - Bikes
Deyva Arthur*

photography there is an element, I believe, of art in the everyday, seeing the spectacular in the quiet simple things of life. People often ask in what country I have taken a particular photograph and are surprised when I often tell them only a few miles from Troy. With photography, I feel I am discovering the world and people around me, and learning to appreciate the present.

As a social worker and journalist, I had aspirations of being a documentary photographer, of telling the much-needed stories of human suffering and bravery, and of

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Challenges in Flower Photography

Jim Craner

Flowers have to be among the most photographed of subjects and the challenge is coming up with something to catch the viewer's attention in our visually 'busy' world. Successful approaches may combine traditional techniques such as point of view, selective focus, and good composition with the new capabilities of the digital darkroom.

My presentation on February 18th for the Digital Group will illustrate flower photography with a series of images made at the Albany Tulip Festival and at the Albany Airport the year the wildflowers appeared. And while it is a little early to be out looking for flowers, here are some tips and techniques for next spring's flower photography!

Lens and Filter Selection

Almost any lens can be successfully employed for flower photography. I've used focal lengths ranging from 300mm to 15mm when photographing flowers over the years. A very wide angle lens, usually combined with an extension tube, allows the photographer to 'park' the lens right next to the flower for a unique point of view in which foreground and background are both included in the shot. The result is a strong sense of place created by the juxtaposition of both near and far objects.

A longer telephoto allows the photographer to 'work' the edge of a field or bed and yet isolate individual subjects. As a practical matter it is often not possible to approach the beds too closely in public gardens, and the responsible photographer does not want to spoil a wild vista for others by trampling wildflowers. An extension tube is often needed as good subjects are often closer than the minimum focusing distance of a longer telephoto lens. Another advantage of the

telephoto lens, in addition to the 'compression' effect, is the 'voyeuristic' view into the world of the flower and the small creatures that share its world. One of my favorite lenses for casual flower photography is my Canon 100-400. While certainly not a 'fast' lens at F4.5-5.6, it allows me to 'reach' out into a bed of flowers and also make subtle compositional adjustments without having to change my shooting location.

While I am not a huge fan of filters



Photo by Jim Craner

generally, the ubiquitous polarizing filter can certainly be successfully employed to cut glare and allow the highly saturated colors of flowers to come through. Other filters can certainly be employed to match film and light, correct color, enhance color, and create other special effects such as adding a starburst to the specular highlights created by water droplets.

Field Techniques

I am a great believer in always steadying the camera to the extent possible, although this does not always mean using a tripod. Shutter speeds can quickly fall to 1/30-1/60 of a second or less when employing a moderate aperture in diffuse light. For the sharpest images, especially when heavier lenses are used, camera support is essential. The conventional so-

lution is a tripod, however I often employ other supports such as 'bean bags' or devices such as the 'Groofwin'™ device manufactured by Rue Enterprises. A cable release keeps the photographer from inadvertently moving the camera during exposure, and frees the hands to hold props and accessories of various kinds. In addition to sharper images, I believe the discipline of using a tripod improves composition. The trick is to find the subject, the point of view, the right lens, etc. before bringing the tripod into play. A quick release system allows the camera to be easily and quickly mounted and dismounted from the tripod head speeding up the pace of work.

Harsh, direct sunlight seldom works in flower photography and the photographer may have to provide some sort of diffusion to create the soft effect of light being filtered through clouds. While flash can be employed to fill shadows in close-up work, I don't think the overall result is as flattering as naturally soft light. Since

we can't control atmospheric conditions, a number of devices are available commercially to provide diffusion, and devices can be improvised from sheer fabric (be careful not to introduce any unwanted color casts).

A number of 'creature comforts' for the photographer are worth mentioning. It's wet out there, especially in the early morning when dew covers everything! I have taken to carrying a light poncho with me. It is small enough to fold and fit in my camera backpack and can serve as a ground cover, or to keep me and my gear dry if a sudden shower catches me out in a field somewhere. Protect yourself from hours of exposure to the sun, stay hydrated, and think about taking

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Flower photography

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along one of those small pads that gardeners use when kneeling for long periods.

I've found that a revealing point of view when photographing flowers is to get low and actually shoot up into a group of flowers. I will also scan along the top of a bed of flowers, looking for one that is a different height, or slightly different color. I then use a telephoto lens to separate this flower from others, and then work into a composition that provides an out-of-focus background against which to isolate and contrast the main subject.

Digital Tools

A number of creative effects – useful in flower photography and tricky to employ in the field – can be created after the shoot in the digital darkroom. These include double exposure and soft focus. Generally speaking, digital cameras do not allow double exposures to be made 'in camera'. These can be created in the digital darkroom with greater control and precision.

During my February presentation for the digital group, I'll illustrate the above techniques, and present a brief slide show of flower photographs using the SmoothShow™ software that some SPS members are employing to create their multimedia slide shows.

Jordan

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from *National Geographic* magazine. This encouraged him to get into photography more seriously. Academically, however, he chose to pursue degrees in Biology and Environmental Studies and worked in Washington D.C. for the National Wildlife Federation and the National Audubon Society before turning to photography full-time.

He began his professional career focusing on people and location photography. His unique sense of perspective, composition, form and texture as well as an intrinsic sense of light served him well to create images of universal appeal. But still he was drawn to the Shawangunk mountains. He writes "Like the Hudson River School artists of the 19th century, I find inspiration in the natural beauty around us. Though one faction of these accomplished painters created their art as metaphor for larger spiritual or philosophical beliefs, another group, Asher Durand most notable among them, sought to express the sublime more simply and directly."

The Hudson River School of painters were a particular influence on Steve. They were a group of American landscape painters of the mid-nineteenth century, who took a Romantic approach to depicting the Hudson River Valley, and of the Catskill, Berkshire, and White Mountains. They were luminists who

responded to a young America and sought to reflect the beauty of the Hudson River valley. In their art Steve saw people who had been affected by the beauty of the region around them just as he was.

"In the photographs I have made of the Shawangunk Ridge, my motivation is similar to Durand's - a scene is rendered and realized on one level, but holds within it more than a record or document of nature at a particular moment, even more than I could intend as I release the shutter."

When I asked Steve about his shooting style he told me, "Serendipity is my buddy." He carries a camera with him in his car and is most likely found pulled over on the side of the road with the camera in his hand or on a tripod shooting something that he saw as he drove by. Other people will be driving by, the same people who will look at his images and imagine him in the vast wilderness, hiking for hours laden with his equipment to reach the spot with perfect light. He's done that too but just as often his images are made more close to home. "People think that this is inaccessible and it really isn't."

It isn't, provided you have the eye of a photographer such as G. Steve Jordan who will be the Print Group's speaker on February 4th. I hope to see you all there.



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When is a photograph a photograph?

N. Sukumar

While this question is posed nowadays in the context of the film/digital conflict, it is worth bearing in mind that the earliest cameras used neither lenses nor film. The *camera obscura* has been in use since ancient times, to form images through a pinhole on the walls of a darkened room. Due to the non-permanent nature of the image, I doubt that we would call these photographs today. Lenses became prevalent in the 16th and 17th centuries. Silver entered the picture (again no pun intended) in 1727, when Prof. Schulze created the first photosensitive compound by mixing chalk, nitric acid and silver in a flask and noticed darkening on the side of the flask exposed to sunlight. In 1816 Nicéphore Niépce combined the *camera obscura* with photosensitive paper and in 1822 he made a contact print (of a portrait of Pope Pius VII) on a glass plate. In 1825 Niépce etched his images on copper, then on tin in 1826. In 1834 Henry Fox Talbot created permanent (negative) images using paper soaked in silver chloride and fixed with a salt solution. In 1837 Louis Daguerre created images on silver-plated copper, coated with silver iodide and developed in warm mercury and patented the *daguerrotype* process. Talbot patented his process under the name *calotype* in 1841. Glass plates, gum bichromate and paper negatives continue in use to this day, but are now definitely considered "alternative process." George Eastman set up the Eastman Dry Plate Company in Rochester in 1880 and it was only in 1889 that improved Kodak cameras came out with roll film instead of paper. Film is thus a relatively recent development (no pun intended) on the photographic scene, but it was this critical technical innovation that enabled photography to move out beyond the realm of artists and photographers and to capture the mass consumer market.

Just such a technical advance has taken place with the digital revolution and, while I doubt that silver gelatin film will ever truly disappear in our lifetimes, it is very likely that it will soon become "alternative process." Every other day some other old-time photographer discovers these market realities and declares with great pomp and finality that "*film is dead!*"

Most photographers, publishers and camera clubs have now, sometimes grudgingly, conceded the point that digital prints and digitally-captured images are legitimate photographs. But there is still considerable resistance to digitally-manipulated images. So when is a digitally-manipulated image a photograph? It is possible to create photograph-like images entirely in the computer using programs like Bryce® with sometimes very realistic-looking (and at other times very surreal) landscapes; obviously these cannot be considered photographs. At the other end are images that obviously started out as photographs, but have been tweaked digitally in much the same way that a photographer would in the darkroom: namely, by burning and dodging, cropping, using contrast filters or adjusting color balance and spotting out specks and scratches. Do these negate the photographic content of the image? Before you answer, consider that if you are using an auto-anything film camera, there is a silicon chip in there that

automatically performs some manipulations before the photons even strike the film surface. Furthermore, if you hand your film over to a drugstore or mail it in to Kodak, the concentrations and temperature of the chemicals and processing times are computer-controlled. You can even opt to forego chemical prints altogether and to have your film scanned onto CD. Then you can send those files (with or without digital manipulations) to a lab to be printed *chemically* on real photographic paper. Where does that leave us? Talk about complicating the issue!

Many digital shooters are content to stay with kinds of digital manipulations we just discussed. Others choose to use the digital process to exercise their creativity. But just as photography is not the exclusive domain of the film shooter, neither is creative manipulation the exclusive domain of the digital artist. The images of Jerry Uelsmann, Freeman Patterson and André Gallant, to name just a few, are instances in point. In one case the composites or montages are created in the darkroom, in the other case, they are done in the camera. Since I want to learn to *take* (not just *make*) better pictures, I personally try to resist the temptation to use Photoshop® to simply correct flaws in my photos. But then should all digital manipulations of photographs be acceptable as

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January Competition Results

Prints

Color

29 Entries

* Jessica Hohenstein	Balloon Festival	1
Tony Hilferty	Up on the Roof	2
Tom Barber	Tracy Ann	3
Barb Lawton	Last Dance	4
Ken Deitcher	Classic Cars	HM
Bob Warner	Three of a Kind	HM
Pat Albano	Untitled	HM

Assigned Boats 35 Entries

Jennifer Harvey	Tugs	1
Bill Delaney	Red Boat	2
John Tobison	Outward Bound	3
Luba Ricket	Red, White and Blue	4
Kevin Sarsfield	Crystal Lake '03	5
Bob Gough	Herreshoff Detail #1	HM
Pat Albano	Trawler	HM
Bill Delaney	Misplaced Boat	HM
David Lilac	Chicago Boatyard	HM
David Lilac	Fishing in the Morning Fog	HM

Monochrome 19 Entries

** F. Bumbardatore	Broken Lamp	1
Bob Gough	Portobello	2
Ran Henrikson	A Statement Being Made	3
Ray Henrikson	Old Gears	HM
Max Tiller	Putting Down Roots	HM
Jeff Perkins	Jack's Foot	HM

Judge Curt Miller

Program Sandy Noyes / Industrial Archeologist

Winner's Notes:

*Jessica used a Canon Rebel 2000, a 28-80 mm lens with Fuji Reala film. It was taken in Glens Falls at 6:00 a.m. at the Adirondack Balloon Festival.

**Frank found this lamp in a customer's rental apartment after the last tenant had moved out and he was called in to repair the bathroom faucet. He used a Canon 10D camera with a Canon 28-135 IS USM lens and a 90° optical viewfinder. The camera was set on the floor using the camera bag as a brace.



Slides

General 37 Entries

* Ken Deitcher	Nude Contemplating 1 Her Image	
Jeff Plant	Dark Trees by a Lake	2
Ken Deitcher	The Portrait	3
F. Bumbardatore	Bike Race	4
F. Bumbardatore	Old Horse	5
Connie F. Houde	Reflection	HM
Kim Koza	Waiting for the Bus	HM
Warren Burton	Untitled	HM
David Lilac	Glenville Serengeti	HM
Jake Amsler	Deep Thought	HM

Assigned Music 13 Entries

** Luba Ricket	Mandolin	1
H. Johannessen	Untitled	2
Ken Deitcher	Woodwind	3
Bob Gough	Guitar	HM

Judge Tom Knight

Program Teri Conroy / Childrens photography

Winner's Notes:

*This photo was originally taken with a Canon A1 camera and a 28- 135mm lens on Fujichrome film. The model was taken at a figure study workshop I attended over 20 years ago. The slide was scanned into my computer with an Epson 2450 flatbed scanner. The image was desaturated and then given a sepia tone in Photoshop. A second, third and fourth copy was made and each sized and placed into subsequent smaller images. A border was applied and a slight texture applied.

**Luba took this winner with a Nikon camera on a tripod, a Tamron lens and Kodak slide film. The light was getting low plus she hid some of the light with a red lace curtain which she hung from a ceiling fan and could rotate. She set the mandolin up against mylar and draped a yellow tablecloth over herself for another color. The red lace curtain reflected in the mylar also. She did this on a cold winter weekend - nice winter activity as time and film go quickly.

Schenectady Photographic Society
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Photograph

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photographs? I feel that this needs to be answered on a case-by-case basis. The *intent* of the image is, to me, a prime consideration. Most newspapers and news agencies have policies that strictly forbid all but the most innocuous manipulation of journalistic photographs. And remember, people have been “doctoring” photos long before the computer. The PSA Nature Division has a similar policy forbidding manipulation of images for nature competitions. For a creative competition, this stricture obviously does not apply. The operative principle in either case seems to be one of honesty: of not altering the content of the image with intent to deceive.

Then there is the question of fairness for the purpose of competition. Do digital manipulations make things easier for the digital artist? You bet they do! At least for many kinds of manipulation, if you know what you are doing and how to go about it. But then an experienced printer will find many things easier in the wet darkroom. It still takes me less test prints to get a good monochrome chemical print in the darkroom than to calibrate my monitor, software, printer, paper and inks and get a decent inkjet print. And does getting your film processed and/or printed at a custom lab not give you an

advantage over the photographers who process and print their own images? Perhaps so, for “straight shooters”, but probably not for creative printers. Ultimately photography is all about what you want your images to say and choosing the right tools for the task, be that a fish-eye lens or a Photoshop® filter. And for every purist who sees the film/digital divide in terms of “real photography” versus digital, there are ten new converts every day who see the same issue as one of photography versus “alternative process” (yes, read: film!)

Local artist

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exposing the truth. I discovered my camera pointed in another direction towards revealing the smaller struggles and beauties of the world found all around me, both near and far.

My role as mother has inspired me to work on several projects including three children’s books illustrated with photographs. In the past my work has been shown in some of the local galleries, including the Fulton Street Gallery and is scheduled for exhibition at the Saratoga Arts Council. Also, I have been a freelance writer for various newspapers. For many years, I worked as a resident organizer at a public housing site and employment counselor for refugees. My experience is varied from secretary to sheep farmer, and recently I became active in the Green Party, seeing politics as important

towards shaping the future.

Creating art for me has been challenging and a whole lot fun. It is something that is hard to do, and hard not to do at the same time. In myself as in the darkroom tray, I look forward to the images that magically appear upon the blank whiteness of the paper.

Artist’s statement about the project/presentation

Worcester State Hospital, Gardner Mental Institute, Asylum for Lunatics are the many names for the fortress for the mentally ill built in 1833 and is now in ashes. Having spent years empty, it seemed abandoned as if in a hurry; leaving behind patient files and traces of the insane like confused ghosts.

The glass plates used in these images are patients from the early days of the Asylum. They are married to photographs of the buildings before those building were burned down. The hospital’s history is long and detailed, but the faces seem to call out the inexplicable history of mental illness that is timeless.

Plan to be with us on Wednesday, February 11 for this interesting presentation.

Photo Grab Bag to be held on February 25th. See page

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for details

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News You Can Use

Photo Grab Bag to be held in February

The photo grab bag will be held this year in February with the judging to be on Wednesday, February 25. Entries will be accepted and materials given out on Print night, Wednesday, February 4 with an entry fee of \$15.

Each entrant will be given a single roll of slide film and the competition assigned topic. Entrants will have one week to expose their film which will be collected on Slide night Wednesday, February 11 for processing. The slides will then be returned to the entrants on the 25th when they will select their best images to be judged in the competition.

This is always a fun event and we hope to have many entries this year. Cash prizes will be awarded to the winners.

March Focus

The *Focus*' assistant editor, Debra Van Deusen, is taking over the helm of the newsletter for the month of March. Please send your articles, stories, news, etc. to Debra at

debradigaphoto@aol.com

26th Photo Regional call for submissions

The photo regional is open to photographers within the 150 miles radius of the Capital Region more than 18 years of age. Artists may submit slides of up to five works or JPEGs. Original work not accurately represented by a submitted slide may be declined at the discretion of the juror, [Tanya Marcuse](#).

Calendar

- March 19 by 7 p.m.: Deadline for receipt of entries and fees
- April 2-4: Receipt of accepted works during regular gallery hours
- April 8, 5:30-6:30 p.m.: Juror's Lecture at Best Western, Troy 6:30-8:30: Opening reception
- April 8-May 15: Exhibition
- May 16 noon-5 p.m.: Pick-up of works

Cash prizes will be awarded.

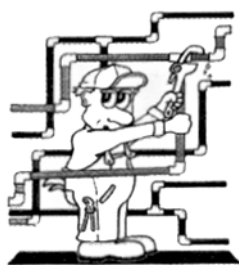
A completed entry form and check must accompany each submission. A stamped self-addressed envelope for return of slides also must be included. Entry fee is \$25 (\$20 with valid student ID) for up to five slides.

Submission by JPEG

JPEG files may be submitted via e-mail to info@fultonstreetgallery.org as an alternative to submitting slides. Up to five jpeg files may be submitted as attachments to a single e-mail. The file size of each jpeg attachment shall not exceed 75 KB. For each image submitted, the body of the e-mail must clearly list (1) the title, (2) the length and width of the photo (in inches), (3) the photographic process used; (4) the filename of the JPEG attachment; and the name and address of the artist.

Further information may be obtained from the Fulton Street Gallery, 408 Fulton St., Troy, NY 12180 at 518-274-8464. Or E-mail info@fultonstreetgallery.org.

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February Calendar

Wednesday, February 4

Print group: The Gunks / G. Steve Jordon
Assigned: Macro at Home

Wednesday, February 11*

Slide group: Local artist / Deyva Arthur
Assigned: Contrasts

Wednesday, February 18

Digital: Flower photography / Jim Craner
Assigned: Flowers

Wednesday, February 25

Photo Essay/Photo Grab Bag: Setting music to a slide essay
and the showing of the photo grab bag entries.



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.