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Portland Photographers' Forum

Newsletter

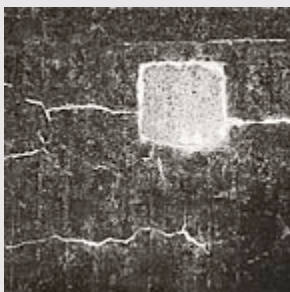
Portland Photographers' Forum meets from 7-9:00 p.m., Monday, August 15, in Room 30 of the Multnomah Arts Center, 7688 SW Capitol Highway, Portland. ([See Map](#))

August, 2011

The Digital Morning-After

That Vague Feeling That Something's Missing

by Pete Gomena



Oscar Wilde once said of smoking, "It is exquisite, and it leaves one unsatisfied. What more can one want?"

I often refer to my little digital camera the "crack cocaine" of photography. It's fast, addictive, easy to use, and ultimately unsatisfying.

Let's be clear: I've been suspicious of digital photography since it swept into commercial studios in the 1990s. My first reaction was to buy an 8x10 camera and start making pinhole pictures. I wanted something primitive, tactile, archaic, esoteric and real. In my workaday world, I learned to use the new technology. Privately, I was threatened by the changes.

I had spent 20 years steeping in the lore of legendary photographers, people with piercing vision, masters of craft who strove to push the limits of their art form. Here, suddenly, was something that threatened to sweep away everything on which I based my creative life. A big portion of my skills suddenly was obsolete.

Now, 15 years later, I own a computer, digital printer, scanner, and, yes, a digital camera. It's all good, but I can't rid myself of the nagging feeling that something is missing. *There just used to be more!*

My feelings were confirmed in July, when a group of PPF members saw the Ray Metzker "Automagic" show at the Portland Art Museum. Our walking tour of the exhibit was narrated by Julia Dolan, the museum's photography curator, whose talk was wonderfully illuminating of Metzker's work, influences, and craft.

Most of Metzker's images were small, but their impact was enormous. Here were images graphically strong enough to grab your attention from across the gallery. The prints (all silver-gelatin) were perfect little gems that spoke of the anonymity, alienation, isolation and mechanization of city life. Each was laden with dark emotion and a sense of wonder and discovery at the same time.

What I came away with, besides a very real urge to print in a darkroom again, was confirmation of the fact that *craft still matters*.

We're in a different photographic world today, and the tools for making great images are there if we learn to use them, analog or digital. Which tools we choose to use and the ideas and emotions we want to express are up to each individual, certainly, and you can take your pick of media.

Which brings us back to electronic addiction and the morning-after feeling it gives me.

My little digital camera is a great thing. It's versatile, and it produces good images as long as I keep the prints small. I find it a valuable tool for giving me instant feedback and keeping my photographic "eye" in shape. It's quick, spontaneous, and very portable. It's even kind of fun to use!

What it lacks is the tactile sense that I'm making something. I become a camera operator, and I get the feeling the camera really has done the work. I can only work with what it produces, and work remotely, with keyboard, mouse and computer. I like what comes out of the printer, but it is a thing somehow reduced, a facsimile, vision without craft, unsatisfying.

With film in my camera, I feel like I'm making important choices about how I want an image to look. Latent images on exposed film waiting to be developed hold an element of surprise and uncertainty, potential and mystery, even if they eventually will be scanned and digitally printed. (Right now this is my best option.) I touch the film as I load the developing reels, I choose developer, time, and temperature, I think about what is on the film as it's fixed, washed and hung to dry. I'm more connected to the process.

I use film any time I want to make an image I feel is important to me. It preserves the option of making "real" prints for that uncertain future time when I might have a darkroom again. It gives me a permanent, physical record of what I saw, real raw material as a result of my experience.

This doesn't mean I won't continue to use digital processes. I feel there is no choice. Digital processes are useful tools, they allow me to quickly and easily manipulate images in ways I couldn't possibly do in the darkroom, and they have become the common denominator. (I can't argue about the weight and portability of digital camera gear, either, and I'm not getting any younger.)

That doesn't mean I have to like it. I now think twice about using my digital camera as often because I know when I'm finished, I'll wish I had that shot on film.

This Month's Meeting, Monday, August 15

Sam Blair

Making the Good Photograph



photo © Sam Blair

Are great photographers born or made, and so are any of us - who are willing to work at it - capable of producing photographs that are not just pretty, or colorful, or cliché shots, but artistically great?

These are questions Sam Blair posed to himself when he decided to leave a successful legal career for the uncertain world of professional photography, where he makes pictures of people and nature. "I only take portraits, both of people and of the Earth," Blair says.

"Twenty-five-hundred years ago, Aristotle studied the question: 'What is the Good Life?'," he says. "Paraphrasing that, I set out to study the question: 'What is the Good Photograph?'"

"I've concluded there are objective, identifiable standards that can be applied to great artistic images," he says, "and that those standards can be analyzed, broken down, and internalized as mental models. My talk will tell you what I think they are."

Please join us from 7-9:00 p.m. in Room 30 of the Multnomah Arts Center, 7688 SW Capitol Highway, Portland, to see Sam's pictures and hear his ideas. To visit his website, "[click here.](#)"

The Sunday School of Photography - On Saturday

An Evening on the Columbia - Saturday, August 20

at Beacon Rock



Mark your calendars now for an evening of photography in the Columbia River Gorge at Beacon Rock State Park and its environs.

We'll meet Saturday, August 20, at 5:00 p.m. in the Beacon Rock State Park marina parking lot. The park is about 45-60 minutes from Portland on the Washington side of the river.

Plan to stay until the park closes at dusk. There are several hiking trails in the park, including the trail up Beacon Rock itself. Bring food and water, and insect repellent is a good idea if you plan to photograph

near the river.

Complete directions and a PDF map of the park are available by ["clicking here."](#)

This event is free and open to the public, but we'd appreciate it if you would register by ["clicking here"](#) to e-mail us so we know who to look for! The park is a big place and we're sure to get scattered. Registering therefore becomes an aid to safety should someone get lost or injured.

PPF Website

Ready For An Update



Work is underway on the PPF website update. We've already added a "Marketplace" page for members to post photographic items for sale, and a couple of members have expressed interest in adding their images to the Member Galleries.

We're still looking for more good images to illustrate the various pages, the "slideshow" on the home page, and images for the "Activities" page.

This is no time to be shy or self-conscious! We had a great outpouring of pictures for the juried show last June, so we know you have more images out there! Instructions for submitting pictures are available as PDF downloads on the Member Gallery and Activities pages. If you want us to post a link to your personal website, [let us know.](#)

See it all at <http://www.portlandphotoforum.com>

Workshops and Related Activities

Lake Quinalt Rainforest Workshop

with Mel and Janell Huffman

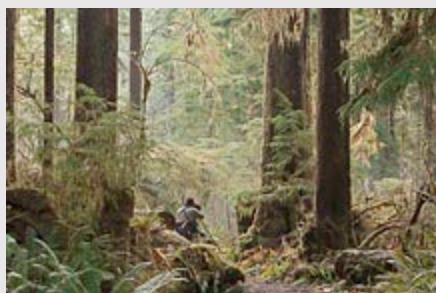


Photo courtesy Mel and Janell Huffman

Join PPF members Mel and Janell Huffman October 6-9 for their annual Quinalt Rainforest Workshop at Washington State's historic Lake Quinalt Lodge.

This year's photography workshop topics not only help the beginner with manual settings and knowledge of their camera, expanded sessions covering composition, exposure compensation, zone system, and image processing make this workshop suitable for all levels of photographers. A highlight of

this workshop is plenty of shooting time while touring the rainforest in lodge-provided transportation. Based on input from last-year's participants, we have included another day of shooting starting our workshop on Thursday evening. Another popular activity

is the Sunday morning wrap up with a visual review and critique of participants' "favorite images."

Autumn season colors add to the beauty of this area. Lake Quinault Lodge, located on the southwest edge of the Olympic National Park in Washington State, is on the National Register of Historic Places, and is a must-see site. When attending this workshop, lodge rooms start at \$99. The cost for this comprehensive workshop is \$125 per participant, keeping the costs affordable allowing all skill levels of photographers to join in on the fun!

[Check out this link](#) for more details and a printable schedule for the Rainforest Photography Workshop.

Coming Up at Northwest Center for Photography

Photo Night & Potluck

Beginning October 4th the Northwest Center for Photography will be hosting Photo Night. We will meet the first Tuesday of the month from 6-9:00 p.m., at NCP, 1028 SE Water Avenue, Suite 50, Portland, OR 97214.

The idea is to create an informal meeting space where photographers and other image-makers can come together to share in a multitude of ways. Each month we'll offer a unique feature presentation or discussion that is relative to our group of professionals, educators, and dedicated amateur photographers.

Photo Night is a perfect opportunity for you to bring your portfolio for a peer review and offer critical feedback for others. Bringing and presenting works in progress is an invaluable way to gather input from others. Finally, these meetings function as a springboard from which to gather resources, network with others and foster creative collaboration in our arts community.

Bring your laptop or your media on a thumb-drive or CD to present. Come with some questions you have been dying to know about how your work is received by others. Lastly, perhaps bring a dish for sharing, a tip or trick or article or artist or any inspiration to share that you have discovered, which keeps your passion for photography burning brightly.

Julie Martinez Fundraising Photography Exhibit

August 1 through 31

Eastbank Commerce Center building, 1001 SE Water Avenue, Portland and Water Avenue Commerce Center building, 1028 SE Water Avenue, Portland. 10 a.m.-10 p.m., 7 days a week. Free admission.

Twenty-four students of Sharon Lavier O'Keefe, Founder, Northwest Center for Photography, donated a wide variety of photographs to help raise funds for the Julie Martinez Medical Fund. Shortly after the first of the year this lovely and talented 39 year old woman was diagnosed with Stage 4 Cancer and although she gave it her all

she died the end of May leaving behind two young children and a loving husband. Due to the generosity of Sharon's students, and a NCP instructor, the exhibit space in both buildings are filled with some really good photography.

Workshops at NCP:

On Assignment: hot deadline!

August 28, Allan Mandell, instructor

Raw processing

Gary Hilton, instructor

Intro to off-camera flash (Strobist)

Michael Schoenholtz, instructor

i witness gallery, (housed in the Northwest Center for Photography)

Allan Mandell's FLOW exhibit closes August 27th.

Mike Crocker exhibits Cataclysm Conditioning, Opening Reception, Friday, September 2, 6-9 p.m.

Gallery Submissions

The exhibition committee meets monthly to review submissions from Northwest photographers. Submission details available at www.nwcenterforphotography.com

For more information [see the Northwest Center for Photography website.](#)

Peter Gomena, President

Portland Photographers' Forum

503-313-2309

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