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# Portland Photographers' Forum

## Newsletter

*Portland Photographers' Forum Meets Monday, June 20, from 7-9:00 p.m. in Room 30 of the Multnomah Arts Center, 7688 SW Capitol Highway, Portland ([See Map](#))*

June, 2011

### President's Message

#### **It's My Rut, and I Like It -- Or Not**

*by Pete Gomena*



I've been stuck in a photographic rut. It's not that I haven't been making pictures, but that my work has become stale and boring.

I'm not lacking tools, nor do I lack opportunity to use them. What I'm lacking is inspiration. Making pictures is still fun, but I've come to the conclusion that something has to change, and it has to be me.

I had breakfast with a small group of PPF members about three weeks ago. A few of us brought prints and passed them around the table. I brought a print that had been rejected for the current PPF group show, one that I particularly liked.

One of the folks present made a simple, direct comment: "It's banal."

He was right. It was just another minor variation on an over-photographed Oregon landmark. On a scale between "yawn" and "WOW!," my photo hovered somewhere around "nice picture."

Short of junking all my gear and hiding in a cave, there has to be an answer to this creative dilemma. How do I break out of my comfort zone and move on to something new and interesting that I can share with someone else? After all, that's what photography is all about, visually communicating ideas.

In school years ago, I was required to create "thumbnail sketches" of a concept for a photograph before gathering the props and materials and going into a studio to create an image. The idea was to visually brainstorm for ideas. The first six sketches likely would be pretty mundane. After a few more, the clichés begin clearing out and more creative ideas begin to surface. Somewhere along the way, the sketchpad reveals the germ of a good idea.

I don't carry a sketchpad in the field when I'm photographing, but a similar exercise happens nearly every time I go out to photograph. It's a mental throat-clearing process that unconsciously happens before I'm ready to speak photographically.

I assume the first roll of film, the first large-format shot I set up and capture, the first half-hour I'm actively shooting, is going to produce garbage. I haven't yet found the creative flow, my mind's eye is still sleepy, and I can't find my damned cable release.

At some point, this all changes. I become aware of the light, shapes, textures and shades appear, and I begin to feel transparent. The camera becomes an extension of my consciousness, and I'm in the moment, in the groove, on the beam, in the zone. If I'm lucky this state of heightened awareness will last for a little while.

The trick, then, is to distill this process so that I can find my state of creative bliss at any time I'd like. (I'll let you know when I figure it out. It's worth a fortune!)

In the meantime, I have found one clue. If I photograph repeatedly in one particular vein, I'll mentally mine that vein until it runs out. If I stop and think about what I've produced to that moment, I can convince myself that I'm painted into a photographic corner and really need to try something different for just a few minutes.

Last Saturday, I dropped my teenage kids and some friends at the Rose Festival carnival and drove to a public garden I'd never visited. I had my fancy digital point-and-shoot along, figuring I could kill some time until my kids had spent all their money.

For about an hour, I consciously used the camera to produce the best-quality images I knew how to make. I was on the return path out of the garden when some curiously manicured bushes caught my eye. I snapped a few frames, and then started to wonder how I could make these images more interesting. I decided that most of what I'd captured up to that point had been wasted electrons, mental sketching. I decided to take some risks.

I remembered some of the goofy features built into my camera. Most of them I'll never use, and surely I'd never use this one: "Fisheye Lens Effect." I mean, come on. Seriously. What rubbish.

It was so silly I spent another hour running around the garden using it to make pictures, totally disregarding my usual, more formal approach to image making. In fact, I found that the more I slowed down and concentrated on making a composition, the worse it looked. It was much more "productive" to point the camera at an interesting bush and press the button. A quick look at the view screen would tell me if it was "good" or not. I might quickly try two or three slightly different versions, but that was it. I accepted "good enough as perfect" and moved on.

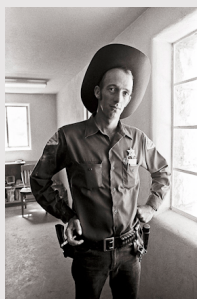
I'm still going over the "take" from this outing. Not everything is worth exploring further, *but there is some interesting stuff in there!* I may not have broken out of my

creative dungeon, but there are some cracks in the walls and the keeper left his keys within my reach.

## This Month's Meeting

### **They Call It Home: The Southeastern Utah Collection**

*with Ken Hochfeld*



© Ken Hochfeld

Nearly 40 years ago, PPF member Ken Hochfeld found an opportunity to document everyday life in small towns of Southeastern Utah. What started out as a college project turned into a two-year voyage of self-discovery. Long stored away but not forgotten, Ken says this unique set of images is to become a book.

Please join us Monday, June 20, from 7-9 p.m. in Room 30 of the Multnomah Arts Center, 7688 SW Capitol Highway, to share Ken's work. To see *The Southeastern Utah Collection* and other examples of his work, [click here to visit Ken's website.](#)

## PPF Names in the News

### **Carol Isaak Takes International Prize!**



"Acolyte" ©Carol Isaak

PPF Board Member **Carol Isaak** received top honors for her image "Acolyte" in the 2011 Julia Margaret Cameron Awards competition sponsored by Save the Children Foundation and ZOOM magazine.

Carol's image took first place in the Single Fine Art Image division for emerging artists. She also received Honorable Mention in the area of Documentary Portfolio for her work in China.

The Julia Margaret Cameron Awards are part of the Worldwide Photography Gala Awards, a juried call for entries benefiting Save The Children. The 2011 award-winning images are not yet posted on the awards website, but you can see the 2010 winners and find more information about future competitions at [The Worldwide Photography Gala Awards.](#)

Locally, congratulations go to **Jeff Brownell, Don Jacobson, Wade Myers, Dennis Purdy** and **Ray Bidegain** for special recognition in the Nature, Landscape, People, "Other," and Purchase Award categories in **PPF's 2011 Group Show.** Jeff, Don, Wade and Dennis each will receive a \$100 prize, and Ray's image will be purchased for the Portland Art Museum's collections. Thanks go to Loren Nelson, Carol Isaak, Julia Dolan

of the Portland Art Museum and MAC Gallery Coordinator Jaye Campbell for making this event possible. Additional thanks go to Patrick Kolb, Tim Brill, Eric Brody and Jack Semura for their help in hanging the show.

Portland Photographers' Forum's 2011 Group Show opened Friday, June 3 with a rousing and well-attended reception. Make a point of spending an hour with this exhibit of the best of PPF now through June 29 at the Multnomah Arts Center Gallery, 7688 Southwest Capitol Highway, Portland.

For more information about PPF and photos about activities surrounding our current show, [see our website.](#)

## On The Road in Ireland - 1969



Donegal, Ireland

1969

Camerawork Gallery Presents  
Evan G. Schneider

PPF is an organization that has encouraged me to explore and realize more from my images. At the urging of several members and after a critique with Scott Jones I began to scan images that result in the following show opening this June 18th at the Camerawork Gallery.

Traveling in Ireland during September of 1969 the Irish spirit that caught my eye... people, confident and curious followed me down the road. Children moved in a world full of possibility despite "the troubles" while old men kept their eyes on the horizon.

The major focus of my photography has been documenting culture... striving to record the sameness we share as humans not the differences. Children everywhere seem to share this place while adults are more likely to find share differences.

## Events Around Town

### Events at the Northwest Center for Photography



PPF member Sharon O'Keefe's Northwest Center for Photography is a busy place this summer.

Globe-trotting photographer Jed Conklin's show, "Turning Corners," continues through June 25 in the Center's I Witness Gallery, and is to be followed by "FLOW," a show by noted garden photographer and former PPF member Allan Mandell.

Mandell also will be teaching two workshops,

From "Flow" © Allan Mandell

"Macro-Botanical, The Flower Within," on Saturday, July 9, and his "Zen Bootcamp," an intensive composition workshop on Sunday, July 10.

Also at NCP is a four-session workshop, "Lightroom Basics with Gregg Kerber," beginning July 12.

For more information on these and other NCP workshops, go to <http://nwcenterforphotography.com/workshops.htm>  
Northwest Center for Photography, 1028 SE Water Avenue, Suite 50, Portland, OR 97214 Phone: 503-384-2783

## Join Portland Photographers' Forum

### Summer Membership Special!

*A Limited-Time Offer*

Folks have been asking how to join PPF, so here's the scoop!

During the months of June and July, we are offering a half-price membership good through December 31, 2011. For just \$25.00, you can take part in PPF's members-only events, including field trips and group shows.

Just use the PayPal button below, or mail a check to us at :

PPF  
P.O. Box 5643  
Portland, OR 97228

Please include your e-mail and mailing addresses with your payment. We never, ever, give out our members' personal information or our mailing list.

You also may join at the June 20 or July 18 meetings. We meet from 7:00-9:00 p.m. in Room 30 of the Multnomah Arts Center, 7688 SW Capitol Highway, Portland.

### 6-Month Membership In Portland Photographers' Forum

**\$25.00**

**Buy Now**



Evan G. Schneider, Secretary  
**Portland Photographers' Forum**

503-984-8701

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