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Portland Photographers' Forum

Newsletter

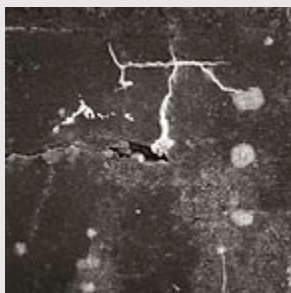
Portland Photographers' Forum meets 7-9:00 p.m., Monday, September 19, in Room 30 of the Multnomah Arts Center, 7688 SW Capitol Highway, Portland. [Click here to see map.](#)

September, 2011

So What Is It, Really?

Exploring the Jumble

by Pete Gomena



I've been thinking lately about how to photograph what's not in front of the camera.

By this I mean that the camera is just a device for capturing light, and that what really matters is what I think I'm going to do with those imprisoned photons.

Can I take the raw image and shape it into something wonderful, or am I wasting my time? What interests me about what I just photographed, and how can I make it interesting to someone else? Where's the sizzle? Where's the "wow?"

This might seem simple, but looking at the dozen or so plastic binders crammed full of negatives that populate my office closet, it clearly is not. Why did I make each and every one of those thousands of exposures? *What was my intent?*

Part of the problem is that I can't pass up a good photograph. If I'm out with my camera, I'm not going to pass on the opportunity to make nice, simple nature or landscape picture if it's sitting right in front of me. I can't say "well, I'm in the mood to make abstracts today, so I won't shoot that pristine pool of water surrounded by trees and rocks in this dramatic morning light."

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About two years ago, photographer and educator Jason Langer talked about his "box system" for sorting images during one of our meetings. He has several boxes, one each for several categories of images. As he works, he files the pictures into the boxes. When a box fills up, he looks at the images in that box and thinks about how to organize them into a theme that he can be fleshed out as a finished body of work or

project. Some boxes fill faster than others, and some might take him several years to fill.

This is a brilliantly simple, effective system, one which I think I'll adopt. I think it will help clarify what it is I'm trying to do when I photograph.

Right now, I have one big box - physically and metaphorically speaking. Things I've photographed over the past three years live there, roughly organized by subject. If I mentally sort them, I find there may be a couple of themes or related threads in some of the series of pictures.

I've shown the actual box of pictures to several people whose opinions I respect. In every case, they've said "there are some nice pictures here." There is a variety of subjects, some color images, many black-and-white. Not one person was bowled over by the collection as a whole, because it was like looking through a shoebox of prints.

Carol Isaak picked out two related pictures and handed them to me. She said, "One of these has a 'wow factor,' a sense of mystery that makes me want to look twice, and the other one doesn't. You should concentrate on making pictures that have more of this sort of a feeling."

PPF member Steve Blair and I walked around Silver Falls State Park last June, leisurely photographing and talking our way along. It was a nice late spring day in a wonderful setting. At one point he said, "I end up with two kinds of pictures. One goes in a pile to use for making note cards, and the ones I really like might eventually make it into a frame and go on a wall."

Bingo. A simple box system.

I now have homes for the off-the-cuff pictures, the oddballs, the merely pretty, and homes for the other sorts of things I photograph. I don't have to forgo making a picture because it doesn't fit a theme. I can file it until the theme or purpose evolves. Doing so will free me mentally to work through the problem of making pictures of interest to someone other than myself, a picture that stands on its own instead of a record of something that found its way in front of my camera.

So now I have a process, but the problem of getting beyond what's in front of the camera still exists. How do I penetrate the subject to make it more than the obvious?

In scanning and printing pictures, I find I'm not close enough to my subject most of the time. I end up cropping images to remove extraneous things or empty spaces. I've become drawn to details, patterns, bits and pieces of things that somehow relate to a larger whole or maybe to nothing at all. If I look back through my files of prints and negatives, I see this is something that's gone on for years but has never been refined.

It was either Edward Weston or Minor White who talked about not photographing what a thing literally is, but rather what else it is. This begins to get pretty deep. Since I'm

not half the photographer either of those men were, I have some serious work to do to refine my vision and visual process. At least I have a process, and friends who will tell me what they really think of my work. It's a start.

This Month's Meeting

Short Stories/Tall Tales

with Grace Weston



Laundry Day ©Grace Weston

Grace Weston's award-winning photographs are staged vignettes that combine humor, wit and psychological tension. Her colorful constructions from toys and miniature props address dilemmas, illusions, joys and fears that are at once personal and universal.

Grace will talk about how her work evolved from black-and-white field photography to the staged miniature work she does today, her

inspirations and the themes that interest her.

See Grace's work at her website: graceweston.com, and at her current show, "Angles of Incidents," at Augen Gallery, 716 NW Davis, Portland, through October 1. Gallery hours are Tuesday-Saturday, 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

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A Weekend in the Gorge

Scenic Burns Farm at White Salmon

registration deadline is this Thursday!



Don't miss this chance for a sensational PPF weekend, this Saturday and Sunday, September 17-18, at Eric Brody's family vacation home at Burns Farm near White Salmon, Washington.

For those of you who have not visited Eric's in the past, you are in for a treat. The house is perched high over the gorge and offers several acres of oak savanna to explore. Spectacular views of Mt. Hood and the Columbia River also are available for your

photographic pleasure. Smoke? Nah, that's enhanced aerial perspective. It should start clearing out soon.

This year we offer two options, a potluck picnic for those who want to make it a day trip, or the picnic plus an overnight stay for those who want to shoot Saturday evening and early Sunday.

We will meet at 8:00 a.m. Saturday the 17th at the gas station/market just east of the Hood River Bridge on the Washington side of the Columbia River. You are encouraged to carpool if at all possible. We then will caravan to Eric's property. The route is circuitous and not well marked, so if you are late for the rendezvous, you might not find your destination. We will supply written directions to those who sign up for the trip.

Overnight accommodations are limited, and overnight participation is limited to the first 12 people to sign up. **Hurry - Just six spots remain!** There are beds for 5 or 6 people, and bunk houses (with toilets) for six more. You also have the option of pitching a tent or sleeping on the deck. (Today's long-range weather forecast calls for a possibility of rain - be prepared!) Sorry, no RVs, campers, etc. Parking space is limited. Again, carpooling is very helpful!

Everyone should bring a beverage and a potluck dish for Saturday's picnic lunch. PPF will supply grilled sausages, buns, condiments, plates, cups, napkins, and cutlery. You supply your own drinks and a side dish.

Overnighters pay \$30 for a Saturday evening steak dinner plus coffee, muffins and juice on Sunday morning. PPF will supply no alcoholic beverages, but individuals may do as they wish. Overnighters also are asked to bring a sleeping bag, air mattress, pillow, and a towel. Plan to leave by noon on Sunday, please.

The roads around Eric's property are gravel, but they are navigable by any passenger vehicle. Hiking boots are a good idea because the terrain away from roads and trails is ankle-turning rocky. Last year a couple of folks came upon a rattlesnake, and poison oak is abundant. Dress appropriately and bring sunscreen and a water bottle.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

This is a members-only event. Spouses or significant others are welcome.

You must register for "day-only" or "overnight." This is critical to purchasing appropriate quantities of food. Remember, the picnic is a free potluck!

Please ["click here to contact Don Nelson"](#) to sign up.

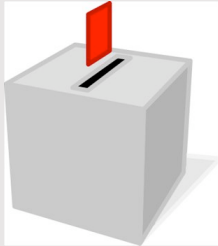
Overnighters, please ["click here to pay by credit card."](#) You may arrange with Don to pay at the meet-up if you do not wish to use PayPal.

The registration deadline for both the picnic and the overnight is 7:00 p.m. Thursday, September 15.

2012 Board of Directors

PPF Elections

time to think about your nominees



Three positions on PPF's Board of Directors are open this fall, so it is time to start thinking about nominees for those positions.

Currently serving are Don Nelson, Evan Schneider and Patrick Kolb. Pat has decided to retire from the board, which leaves his seat uncontested.

To nominate a candidate for any of the three positions, the Board's election committee must receive petitions signed by at least 8 members (10% of the membership) by the October 17 meeting. Petitions may be delivered to [Ray Bidegain](#) or [Carol Isaak](#) prior to the October 17 meeting. The Board also may nominate candidates.

The electronic "poll" will open October 10 through the end of the October 17 meeting. Those not voting electronically may vote by paper ballot at the October meeting.

Other News You Can Use

Workshops, Lectures, Shows at Northwest Center for Photography



© Mike Crocker

Mike Crocker's show "Cataclysm Conditioning" continues at the i witness gallery, 1028 SE Water Ave., Ste. 50, Portland. Crocker will talk about his work at the gallery, Friday, October 7, from 6-9 p.m.

Renowned garden photographer Allan Mandell returns to Portland October 9 to teach a compositional workshop titled "The Line". Mandell considers line the essential compositional ingredient.

Michael Schoenholtz's upcoming workshops, Intro to Street Photography and Introduction to Off-camera Flash provide opportunities to stretch your boundaries and sharpen your photography skills.

Appreciate the value of a weekend dedicated to photography coupled with the stunning scenery of Silver Falls State Park! Check out Gregg Kerber's Nature photography retreat, October 28-30.

For information on these and other events at Northwest Center for Photography and i witness gallery, ["click here"](#) to go to the NCP website.

Peter Gomena, PPF Webmaster
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