THE JOURNAL PHOTOGRAPHS / STORIES / OBSERVATIONS

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WELLOME TO THE JOURNAL AUGUST 2020

This issue is all over the map; geographically, aesthetically and temporally. Ancient structures of urban Europe, a remote corner of North Dakota, a clearing storm over a river in the Pacific Northwest and a relic of the Second World War in the Pacific are subjects in this issue. We have grand landscapes, portraits of places and abstract design. A variety of things to see.

What draws them together is the concept of change. We are more aware of change these days because it happens so quickly and dramatically. How we live our lives today is quite different than it was a few short months ago. The Toutle River changed dramatically in a few short minutes when Mount Saint Helen erupted in 1980. Camouflage for a World War II airplane averted the drastic change of destruction. The one room country school is gradually being reclaimed by the land and weather. Castles and Cathedrals have been resisting changes for millenia.

Cathedral, Cologne



Bratislava Castle



Bratislava Castle

The gate is open. We can enter or exit through the thick walls of the castle. We do not know what is beyond the gates and the thick walls. We enter slowly, observing and marveling at structures that have withstood the test of invaders and more importantly the test of time. The doors are closed and we wonder about the treasures stored inside. The Castle has repulsed another swarm of invaders. This time it was a group of American Tourists.









The Last of a Breed

Seth is one of the last in the area to hand make saddles, reins and harnesses from leather. His hands are large and muscular from the years of working the leather by hand. The harnesses are filled with hay and getting the hay distributed correctly inside the harness is a tedious job. Sometimes it is easy, other times it takes a bit of work to make it right. Seth is the only one he knows that is willing to take the time to make harnesses by hand. He said the young people don't want to take the time to learn and practice the craft of harness making. He wondered what would happen when his hands get too weak to work the leather.



Clearing Storm, Toutle River



Clearing Storm, Toutle River

Living on the edge is the way of photography. We do not seek the static, but the dynamic. We create our art at the edges; the edge of the day, the edge of the thunderstorm, or where angry clouds meet the tops of mountains. We are drawn to that place and time where we can see, feel and experience the dynamics of change.





















Postcards from the Creative Journey February 18, 2018

Is There a Right Way to Learn?

At the two extremes, there are two particular ways to learn software. One is to learn the arcane transmutations of digital editing and then go out and look for ways to display your most recently acquired technical virtuosity. The other end of the spectrum is to learn specific skills only when they are required to realize your artistic vision. Both motivations to learn are equally valid and you probably know people that employ each method, sometimes on the same project.

Here's the key issue that we need to identify, understand and deal with as we create art in the digital world. Purely technical achievement in this day and age is the most perishable of skills. If your artwork depends on the latest technical gimmickry, your advantage will indeed be short. Technology moves so fast that no matter which way you choose to learn, the current features, will be superseded by the next generation of technology.

The only lasting advantage is what you are creating, not how you create it. Original ideas are the only long term advantage in the world of art. That is really important. So important I will say it again. Original ideas are the only long term advantage in the world of art.

A photograph of the ruined Maynton House in Cary, North Carolina. This orphan image is one of my favorites, but I could never make it fit into any of my Academy Street folios.



Great Grandpa's School

Great Grandpa's School

Great Grandpa's School wasn't very big at all. It just had the two rooms and the other room was for storage. Today it sits in the middle of field far away from even a dirt road. The location is remote today, but not when it was built near the intersection of four plots. At that time it was convenient for the families that owned the surrounding land. Building the school was a community project. There were no roads to the school and the paths from the various farms to the school have disappeared. It's been decades since the old school was used for much of anything. The weather is weakening the structure and already some sections of the building have collapsed. Soon, the building will be gone. I hope the memories of the school will somehow survive.















Survival

The victor of a war is a survivor. Being able to go home is the only measure of success. One of the ways to survive is to not be seen. Random shapes of background colors were painted on shiny metal surfaces to disguise and decrease the visibility of an airplane.

The combination of the hard metallic surfaces and the organic shapes of the camouflage are an exercise in abstract art. When we create our art, we often wonder if our work will be a success. The sole arbiter of success of this artwork is "Did the airplane survive?" In this case the answer is a resounding, "Yes."













"Marley was dead, to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that."

I would continue, but I'm pretty sure this story has already been told and much, much better than I could ever hope to tell it. But Old Marley is what I thought when I saw this door knocker. It's that collective memory we have that inspired this little "drive by photo." It's funny how we have memories, stories, and thoughts triggered by something we see. We capture the memory so we can all share in that collective experience.

Visual clues for our memories are the probably the largest category of images we make. Look at the manifold social media image sites. We have pictures of where we've been, what we eat, things we wear and our pets. The volume of such images is staggering and the number keeps growing. We save images to help us remember parts of our life that are important. So it is with the door knocker and Jacob Marley, an image that reminds me of a story.





A Few Closing Words

Bratislava Castle

The gate is an entry to Bratislava Castle in Slovakia. As part of our tour one of our destinations was the Castle. Upon arriving we found the building unexpectedly closed. It was a very short stay.

Clearing Storm, Toutle River

We spent a rain soaked day on the Toutle River, patiently waiting for a storm to blow through before sunset.

The downside to clearing storm photographs is you have to begin the processduring astorm. Photographing from underneath the back hatch of an SUV is not ideal, but we do what we have to do while we wait for the storm to clear. On the other end of the meteorological spectrum, a late summer afternoon in Divide County North Dakota was perfectly wonderful. Sometimes, the vantage point for the key photograph puts you in the oddest of places. That's me in the photograph above. In a graveyard. Above ground to be sure, not like Old Marley.

Great Grandpa's School

Survival

The camouflage belongs to a Nakajima KI-43 "Oscar," a Japanese aircraft from the Second World War. This is one of the aircraft that did not make it into "A Boy's Dream" folio. The jungle camouflage made great abstract compositions.



Joe Lipka has shared his vision since he began photographing.

In the last thirty years, his photographs have appeared in over one hundred juried exhibitions, more than twenty solo exhibitions and have been printed in both *LensWork, Black & White Photography* (UK) and F-Stop Magazines.

His website www.joelipkaphoto.com has continuously evolved since it was launched in 2004. His blog Postcards from the Creative Journey, published weekly since 2010, feature a photograph and a little bit of writing.

His newest blog, *The Daily Photograph*, is simply that. A new and interesting image posted every morning at 8:00 AM.

Blog: https://joelipkaphoto.typepad.com/the_daily_photograph/

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