



RANDOM THOUGHTS
ON PHOTOGRAPHY # 5

BY
JOE LIPKA

ART AND CRAFT

A friend of mine saw a tribute (cover) band last weekend. He said they were very good at impersonating the real band. These guys could hit the notes, do the moves and create the playlist but they didn't do it first. That to me is the separation between art and craft. It has to do with the ability to use the craft to convey *your* thoughts or feelings about a subject. Playing some one else's notes is not high art, but high craft. These guys had skill, craft and technical proficiency, to reproduce tone for tone other's original work. Tone for tone, eh? That's my cue translate this into photography speak.

We have tribute photographers, too. Three are lots of us, at certain phases of our lives that can't go by a photogenic green pepper, or a torn poster on the wall or just drive on through the Wawona Tunnel in



Yosemite. We all make or remake our version of the classic images. These classics have been enumerated in other Random Thoughts. The suggestion (again) is, if you are not the first, then do it better, or show us

the subject in a new way that helps us (your audience) know it better or know you better. So, if you look in your viewfinder or ground glass and see a photograph that you have already seen before, then please don't waste the film on that image.

Craft is important. But it is a tool in service of your art. You can duplicate the masters if you choose. We all do, just remember, it's a stop along the way to developing your own art.

REALLY GOOD PHOTOGRAPHS

Photograph what you are interested in, but photograph it in a way that makes me see what interests you about the subject. It doesn't take much effort to make a photograph. It takes a lot of effort to make a really good photograph.

A DIFFERENT POINT OF VIEW

I would like to see some photographs made by a photographer that is at least 6'-8" (about 2 meters) tall. It would be really interesting to see how this extra foot of elevation would affect photographic compositions.

HOW ABOUT "DO OVERS?"

What about "do overs?" Let's say you are overcome by wave of nostalgia or decide to make an old print again. You drag out the print, or negative and head for the darkroom or you head for the scanner. Here's where it gets confusing. You probably won't be able to find the same photographic printing paper, maybe the developer is not made any-

more. You probably won't print it the same because the materials are different and I hope that you probably a better printer than you were when you made the original print. Should you scan the negative, run it through photoshop and that fancy new digital printer, it will definitely not be the same thing as your original print. It just might even be better



than your original print. Now what? Improvements in materials technology and your skills (we hope) allow you to revisit your previous works and make them contemporary (Remember that thought I had on how to define "current work").

Does the purchase of new software require you to revisit everything you have ever done just to do it over with the latest and greatest technology? Look around my web site (please do) to see what I am talking about. There are about twenty portfolio projects created as Adobe Acrobat documents. They all look different because they were created at different times with different levels of software, feedback from users and my constantly changing skill levels with the relevant software.

If I were obsessive about design and consistency, these projects would be revisited on a routine basis to insure stylistic consistency. Big corporate web sites will so that, I will not. My preference is to move on to the next project rather than rehash past work. Look forward, that's where the opportunity is.

MY LATEST FAILURES

My photographs were not accepted for two juried exhibits. Big boo hoo. I say that sarcastically because art is all about rejection and failure. So many of the photographs I make are not "keepers" that I really don't mind too much if they are not accepted in a juried exhibition. I can live with the rejection and juror's judgment on the relative merits of my work against other photographers. The only thing that mildly annoyed me was the most honored work of the exhibition. The grand prize winner was a group of photographs of sock monkeys. A professional photog-

rapher I saw at the opening reception looked at them and declared them to be the type of work a commercial photographer does when he has a free afternoon and some film left over from his last assignment. "A clever piece of self promotion to be sent out to clients," were his exact sentiments. Maybe that's what the juror was looking for, something cute, clever and amusing instead of whatever we insist is fine art photography these days.

Printing for a book or something in between? Asking yourself what the final result of your project is before you start might help you avoid printing for the box.



The images are from "Summer is Warm with Sunshine" folio from the Sense of the Seasons Project.



PRINTING FOR THE BOX

One of my photo buddies asked me what was the eventual goal for a project I was making. "Are you Printing for the Box?" The implication is that the work would never see the light of day or exhibition, but would be consigned to spend its entire existence in a storage box under the bed. This, of course, makes one question the goal of your most recent photographic project? Printing for the box? Printing for an exhibition?

THE CONTENTS OF THIS COMPUTER MEDIA
ARE COPYRIGHTED MATERIALS

Please note that this computer file has been provided as a consumer product for the private and non-commercial use of the purchaser only. Its' contents are copyrighted in its entirety and may not be duplicated by any means for use other than by the original purchaser. Each article, portfolio and photographic image is copyrighted by the author and may not be duplicated for any purpose or by any means without his consent.

© 2009 Joe Lipka Photography

Visit my Web site: www.joelipkaphoto.com