

A black and white photograph of a grand, ornate staircase. The staircase features a wide, curved balustrade with decorative balusters. To the left, a large, fluted column supports a heavy, carved capital. Above the staircase, a series of arches are visible, each adorned with intricate, symmetrical scrollwork and floral carvings. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the textures of the stone and the depth of the architectural details.

# Waiting for the Bishop

*Joe Lipka*



## Waiting for the Bishop

"I'm sorry, but we will have to wait here on the staircase ten or fifteen minutes," our tour guide said. She continued, "Once we enter the Abbey, you will not be able to use your cameras." The stairs were filled with my fellow tourists almost elbow to elbow. For a moment I pondered what to do with the upcoming idle time. Looking up I discovered a visual playground of baroque delights.













Swirls and arches, ornate borders, patterns, filigrees and moldings covered the walls and arched ceiling. Plaster, stone, wood and metal, common construction materials were transformed into the most elegant of decorations in a stairwell. These anonymous artisans created art in what we consider a utilitarian space; a stairwell. Their artwork lasted more than twenty generations, surviving battles, wars and domestic troubles to delight present day tourists with its beauty.













The modern tourist is used to stairways that are stark, unadorned and utilitarian; walls of plain epoxy paint with stenciled safety signs and arrows to direct us. This Baroque stairway is anything but stark and unadorned. The detailed designs created by these baroque artisans reveal that constructing the Abbey was a form of art.













Over the past six centuries countless numbers of people waited on the stairs. We share the experience of marveling at the decorations and reflect on those that commanded the resources to decorate a simple stairwell with so many objects of beauty. The wait is to remind us we are approaching a place of both temporal and spiritual power. We are like those petitioners of centuries past; waiting in hushed tones in the presence of beauty and the anticipation of seeing the Bishop.







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* and *Black & White Photography* (UK) Magazines.

His website [www.joelipkaphoto.com](http://www.joelipkaphoto.com) has continuously evolved since it was launched in 2004. His blog *Postcards from the Creative Journey*, published weekly since 2010, is a collection of his photographs and thoughts on the creative process.

## COLOPHON

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*The images in this portfolio  
were made at the Melk, Abbey  
in Melk, Austria May, 2018.*

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Web site: [www.joelipkaphoto.com](http://www.joelipkaphoto.com)  
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