

A A R O N D O U G H E R T Y P H O T O G R A P H Y

EVENT HORIZON

I have wrestled with “subject” for years and have experimented with where the locust of “significance” lies in a work. At one extreme, the subject is a building I’m photographing for a client - the image is all about capturing and representing the best qualities of the building and has nothing to do with any message the photographer needs to address. Somewhere in the middle on the subject spectrum, the print itself becomes the significant product of the photograph, not the object or scene portrayed in it - as in my Centering or Painted series photos. At the opposite extreme of the spectrum, the photograph is all about the act of visiting a location and taking photos. The images are the product of a sort of an unwitnessed performance art “event”. I arrive here with this series of photos as a recognition and admission that I *like* cameras and *like* taking pictures. My Grandfather, while he was alive, loved cameras and owned (at least for a little while) most all the finest cameras available in his day - Exactas, Canons, Leicas, Alpas, *etc. ad nauseum* - and he took photos mostly of family in stiff poses and endless repetitive snapshots of flowers in the yard. When he died, my grandmother offered me grocery sacks full of his slides. She was throwing them out because some old friend of his wanted the empty slide trays.

My Event Horizon photos are an homage to the joy of taking pictures and to all the photographers whose life’s work will eventually spiral into the grocery sack of oblivion. The title Event Horizon is a reference to the frontier around a black hole within which nothing can escape. Light that passes too close is sucked in; light skating just outside the black hole’s reach will be bent off course, but whizzes on by.

PAINTED

These buildings are made of brick (most of them) - a material that is sufficient all by itself to enclose a building against the elements. But every one of them has been given a coat of paint. The paint might have been applied to seal failing mortar joints, but on these buildings it was more likely done to “dress them up”. And many of them are painted not so much to beautify them as to make them go away.

This series has evolved into an expression of my frustration with current economics, the “unemployment thing” in particular. They didn’t start out that way, but as I scoured the city looking for appropriate buildings, I started to feel some sympathy for these places, especially those with the windows painted over. I was laid-off in May 2009 after a 25 year career as an architect and have at times felt like I had been painted over, windows and all.

FUNNEL CAKE

These are photos taken at the 2009 SantaCaliGon Days Festival in Independence, MO. I’m drawn to the grass-roots entrepreneurial spirit on display at this event in a year that is by all economic accounts the most miserable of my lifetime. The odd assortment of aluminum siding installers and home-made root beer bottlers are not unlike so many amoebas in a reef, all of them straining the waters for sustenance.

HAND

These photos, loosely, are of man-made things that have been decorated or personalized after their initial manufacture or construction - or were made with more attention to detail than the job strictly required. They demonstrate, in my mind, an act of an individual’s engaging or “taking ownership”. Each is photographed at arm’s length to relate the creator’s working distance - and presented as triptychs to help convey the border less nature of the works. I hope to add to these...

JUNKYARD

People seeing me with a camera asked what I was taking pictures of. At first I told them about wanting to record the look of a place threatened by an "Eminent Domain" ruling. Their eyes glazed over - too many words. Then I said, "I'm an artist, blah, blah, blah...". Glazed eyes. So I edited my explanation to the essentials. "This place - the colors, the people..." A guy in his station wagon considered this, and took a bite on his cigar, "It's a junkya'd". I shrugged, "It's beautiful." He made the slightest head tilting gesture that said, "You're nuts, but if you like it, knock yourself out". The "junkyard" is a few square acres across the street from the new home of the Mets on Willet's point in Queens.

BACK SIDES

These typical 1930's (give or take a decade) buildings near downtown Kansas City were built with nice materials and detailing at the street facade for patrons and passer-by to enjoy, but were enclosed on the other sides with whatever low grade brick was cheap and available, usually with little attention to appearance. Utility was the only "designer". Manifest economy. We've invented uglier ways to finish "unseen" buildings since, but brick was the choice in those days if you wanted more than just wood siding.

THE ZOO

These are photos from a recent trip to Joan's home state of Michigan. She was busy helping to prepare for a wedding reception; Crystal and I went to the Detroit Zoo to see polar bears. I still don't know how there can be peace in what should be the Wisconsin Upper Peninsula.

CRANES & STARLINGS

These photos are of roughly the same patch of sky near the site of the new IRS building in Kansas City. The cranes will go away when the building is complete, but the birds will still flock over SW Boulevard at dusk every winter evening.

AIR SHOW

Everybody goes to these things for different reasons. Some go for the all-fat bratwurst, some go for the jet-engine powered pick-up truck - but everyone's happy to stand around for hours in the heat waiting for something to fly overhead -*fast!*

NIGHT PARK

I went back for these photos one night after walking the dog. It had just rained and was THICK steamy. Glowed like a fish aquarium!

COWS

In these photos I set set out to prove Frank Lloyd Wright wrong who, I understand, once said, "You can't take a bad picture of a cow". I got to know these cows a little in the couple days that I got to borrow them (from my cousin Paula Heck and her husband Greg), and got a glimpse at the cow personalities each possesses and discovered how the animals could be made to mimic the landscape they're an element of. Whether Frank Lloyd is right or wrong, I leave to the viewer.

CENTERING

This series began as a personal revolt against the "Thirds Rule" of composition, which states (and I paraphrase) that the subject in a good photo is placed at one of the intersections of lines drawn vertically and horizontally

through a photo in a way that divides the frame into equal thirds. I strove with these images not only to avoid locating the subject at those four spots, but to have no "subject" at all. At the very center of each I attempted to put nothing with any "subject" level significance; edges, telephone poles, blank sky... I'm pleased with the immediacy these non-subjects achieve, but after having applied my own preconceived rule in lieu of the "official" one, I find that the life in many of the photos are those elements in the composition that defy my rule; the wires that drape from nowhere in particular to nowhere, or the crooked rail...

ITALY

These are the few photos I like out of the many I took during a trip to Europe in 2000. The other 600 are big-eyed, first-time-in-Italy tourist photos in color..

AUNT NOLA'S

These photos were taken in 1980 at my great aunt Nola's house in Columbia, Missouri. Nola was a professor of Mathematics at the University of Missouri, and before that at Tulane and I'm not sure where else. She's only one of several wonderful and amazing Anderson and Cannon women I'm related to. If she'd known she would miss living to be 100 by a only few months, it might have killed her.