

SCENIC WILD PHOTOGRAPHY

- WINTER, 2004 -

Greetings,

Winter is coming along well in Utah. We had a lot of snow this season, and some are even going as far as to predict the end of a 5-year long drought.

Snow is everywhere, from the tall peaks of the Wasatch, around the Great Salt Lake, and on the red rock monuments of the Colorado Plateau, adding a new twist to the already wonderful scenery.

As temperatures remain below freezing for days on end, often dipping below 0F, any time spent outdoors becomes ever more challenging. This is a time for shorter excursions and a few more indoors projects, from making prints to office work (not quite as exciting, but it's probably for the better as I may not get around to it otherwise).

As some of you already know, May's workshop is already full. Unfortunately it will be the only one offered this year. Michael Gordon and I are planning at least one workshop in 2005. More details will be announced here as they become available.



Guy

Save Our Canyons Celebration



For those of you located in or near Salt Lake City – here's your chance to enjoy a great dinner, help a local wilderness group, and bid on a variety of items, including a number of fine art prints. On February 26, 2004, Save Our Canyons (<http://www.saveourcanyons.org>), an organization dedicated to protecting wilderness in the Wasatch Mountains, will be holding a celebration to commemorate the founding of the Lone Peak Wilderness area. Two of my framed prints (valued at \$200.00 each) will be up for silent auction to benefit the organization.

The celebration will be held at Oasis Café and begin at 7:00PM. The event will involve a speech from former mayor Ted Wilson, music, food, and local wines. Tickets are \$30. For more information, call Save Our Canyons at 801-363-SAVE.

Print of the Month gets even better!

For those of you not familiar with our Print of the Month offering – it is the most cost-effective way to own a collection of our fine-art prints. We offer 3 or 6-month subscription, sending out a choice of limited edition prints for the fraction of the cost of purchasing them individually.

Current subscribers have been receiving these 8x10 prints and several expressed their desire to receive larger sizes. Starting immediately all new Print of the Month prints will be sized to 11x14 at no additional charge.

For more information, please visit our web site at:

<http://www.scenicwild.com/sw/pom/index.jsp>

What is Art?



Among the more futile arguments dominating various discussions, consuming printed page space, Internet bandwidth, and valuable conversation time, even in the most remote and improbable of places, is the meaning of art – what constitutes art, what is or is not art, who is or is not an artist, and the artistic value of this or that. As I ponder these concepts myself, I cannot help but wonder why it matters. The one thread connecting all forms of art is the notion of art. In other words – if someone considers it art, it is art. That's about as succinctly and wholly as I can define the concept.

On photography forums, the discussion then often drifts to whether photography itself is art, whether any kind of photography (color, digital, nature, etc.) is art and other such mind-numbingly useless trivia.

To me anything and everything can be art, and is art if intended as such. Whether anyone sees value in it is completely irrelevant. Any creative outlet is a means of creating art and anyone expressing their creativity is an artist.

Some of the best descriptions of art and its context come from one of my favorite authors – Albert Camus who puts to rest the whole sordid argument in one sentence: "art lives only on the restraints it imposes on itself, and dies of all others". Do not let anyone impose their own restraints, misconceptions, bigotry, ignorance, and narrow-mindedness on YOUR art!

On Inspiration

Inspiration is the reason of all art. Skill complements inspiration in the creative process. What inspires you?

Try as I might, I have not yet found a way to "turn on" inspiration. Some days I will venture in the most sublime of places and come home empty handed, other times I may discover beauty in the most unlikely locations. A fickle state of mind, inspiration, sometimes brought on by the senses – music, a scent, visual elements, other

times it's memories, people, conversations. And sometimes, sometimes it's just there, or not, for no apparent reason.

On a recent trip I left home before dawn, tired and distracted, not quite sure what I was after, pushing myself to go out there with the hope of finding "it." The first few sips of hot coffee on a frigid night made the first dent – hope was born. Rolling down the empty road I could not see the mountains, but I could feel their presence, sleeping ancient giants. Then the music took over – Mozart's Requiem, and how couldn't it? A shroud of fog lay over the valley, thin veils of mist were parting in front of me, illuminated by my headlights as the faint pre-dawn light slowly revealed hints of the peaks in the distance. My thoughts drifted to the mysterious "Grey Messenger" who brought about this equally monumental music – the swan song of a legend. As the sun slowly rose, still hidden behind the massive ridges, the sky began to turn red; the horns grew louder, sharp blades of light pierced through the Wasatch front, carving down canyons with swords of golden light. The sopranos howled as the peaks began to glow, and I could feel my heart jolted with every beat of the tympanis – enough to put the fear of a mythical God even in a sinner like me. Kyrie eleison!

That was it. A sunrise lasting but minutes, and I was ready to take on the universe in search of more beauty. On any other day, such music would fade into the background, and the rising sun would be just "pretty." On this morning it was a glimpse into dimensions beyond surreal.

*Rex tremendae majestatis,
qui salvandos salvas gratis,
salva me, fons pietatis.*



More on Velvia 100F

Those who have been following my recent film evaluations may remember I fully embraced Fuji's new Velvia 100F and Astia 100F as my "standard" films for color work.

Over the past few years I always carry at least two emulsions with me – a high contrast saturated film (initially Velvia 50, then switched to 100F), and a low-contrast alternative for situations demanding it (initially Provia 100F, then Agfa RSX-II, and now Astia 100F).

The more saturated emulsions do a fantastic job on pre-dawn and post-sunset light, rendering beautiful pastels and the deep tones of Earth shadow and subtle gradients in the sky. The low-contrast emulsions served me well with scenes requiring good shadow detail and/or situations where I want to capture a wide contrast latitude. Astia 100F does an especially good job of it.



Recently, however, I found myself reaching for Velvia 100F more and more. On a couple of situations now I captured the same scene on multiple films, preferring Velvia's color but worrying about blocked shadows. In almost every situation, the new Velvia surprised me with the amount of shadow detail it managed to capture.

Working on shadows in a contrasty Velvia scan requires a little more coaxing (dodging, contrast adjustments, etc.) but the end result is quite impressive. The detail is clearly there.

I will continue using Astia 100F where exposure latitude is the deciding factor (e.g. slot canyons or harsh mid-day light), but as I get more and more familiar with Velvia 100F, it ends up being my film of choice even in situations where its predecessor would fail miserably.

Working with a high contrast film makes accurate exposure all the more critical. I am still not at a point where I would "bet the farm" on

Velvia in a tough situation, but my confidence increases the more I use it. If you haven't tried it yet – take this as an enthusiastic recommendation.

The Latest Gadget

I may be late jumping on this particular bandwagon, but on a recent trip I brought with me a new toy – a miniscule MP3 player. Loaded with several hours of music – from Classical to Classic Rock - I was in music heaven for two whole days in the backcountry. No longer dependent on radio waves (that in these parts usually carry only Country music and AM talk shows, if anything), I was spoiled by crystal-clear digital sound big enough to simulate an opera house. Someone should have told me about this before!

If music is as powerful a catalyst to your creativity as it is to mine – get yourself one of these little marvels!