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"I get several photography magazines and **LensWork is the one I notice I most eagerly open.** You're doing good work." -- *Pat Breslin*

"Thanks for producing what is, in my opinion, **the only mag worth subscribing to.**" -- *Rob*

"Thanks!!! **LOVE LensWork;** wish it was weekly..." -- *Scott*

"I truly love your magazine, and **find it an inspiration to my own work** in photography, although I am just a wanna be "artist" turned amateur. Your magazine is a great comfort to me while I sit on board ships in the Arabian Gulf stinking of sweat and dreaming of cooler climes." -- *Timothy Gordish*

"I also wanted to compliment you and a wonderful publication. It is **clearly better than any other similar publication** - especially *Aperture* (the "new" version)." -- *Jack B. Combs*

"**I LOVE your publication** - a friend of mine just gave me the most recent issue." -- *Lorraine Shaw*

"I just picked up a copy of your magazine and I want to know, where have you been all my life? This says No. 36 on the front, does this mean I've missed 35 of these? **I enjoyed every bit of this issue, from cover to cover.** Just wanted to say hi and I'm sorry I didn't know about you before." -- *Katharine Thayer*

"The concept of what you are doing is fantastic; and, of course, it is more than a concept." -- *Bill* "P.S. **Appreciate most of all the "brains" so evident in the operation.**"

"I just wanted to write and say "Thank You" for producing a magazine of **such high quality.** The May-June issue was the second issue of Lenswork that I had purchased and once again **no word has gone unread.** I am new to the world of Photographic Art and Photography but the insight that I get from the pages of *LensWork*, both written and visual far exceed the price of purchase. Thank you once again!" -- *Jason Gray*



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"I have been a subscriber for a while now and have to tell you **how starved the photography community would be without your publication.** I am so very happy you are no longer quarterly. I have only one wish for you, and I mean this in a good way. May you never enjoy broad commercial appeal." -- *Marc Climie*

"This 'preview' is a delightfully tantalizing treat, one which certainly brightened up my morning. On the other hand, it's cruel torture - now I've got to **race frantically out to the mailbox, day after day, eagerly hoping that the next issue of your excellent magazine will be waiting there ready to be devoured,** only to be disappointed by 'regular' mail. If you were trying to show just enough of the magazine to drive viewers into a frenzy to see the whole issue, well, you've succeeded. Thanks for putting out such a fine magazine." -- *Paul Butzi*

"I REALLY LIKE YOUR MAGAZINE! I **love to read the in-depth interviews,** and to hear what others are doing and thinking. It brings so much more to the field of photography when you can understand where someone is coming from. I also **enjoy the connection back to other arts.** After all, we do all speak a similar language and have common concerns when it comes to being creative." -- *Jim Graham.*

"Thanks. We are enjoying both the photography and commentary in *LensWork* - **thought-provoking and like having another congenial colleague** offering new thoughts and insights." -- *Ed and Dorothy Monnelly*

"Just finished looking through / reading *LensWork* No. 32. I wanted to say what a great publication you have here. **Thought-provoking editorials, thorough interviews, and splendid portfolios.**" -- *Miles Budimir*

New Bradford Washburn Folio!



LENSWORK

Photography and the Creative Process • Articles • Interviews • Portfolios • Fine Art Special Editions

No. 51 Feb - Mar 2004



Interview with
Adam Jahiel

Article
Joe Lipka

Portfolios
Scott Campbell

David Fokes
Adam Jahiel

EndNotes
by **Bill Jay**

LENSWORK

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Photography and the Creative Process
Articles • Interviews • Portfolios

Editors
Brooks Jensen
Maureen Gallagher

In this issue

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Joe Lipka

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EDITOR'S COMMENTS



Tool as Door

We all know that a change of camera can be the precursor to a change in artistic vision. Said another way, the tools we choose change the way we see the world. Nowhere does this become more visible for photographers than a radical change in tools – like the change from 35mm to a view camera, or from a view camera to a digital one.

By way of background, I skeptically purchased a low-end digital camera just to experiment and keep in touch with this emerging technology. As long time readers of *LensWork* know, I could care less about equipment, but I do care a great deal about the photographs and the artistic flexibility that our tools can provide us. For me, what counts is not the tool but how the tool allows me to be more creative. Am I more productive? More inventive? More purposeful? More communicative? Truer to my inner vision? More responsive to the environment? Needless to say I've never been a camera collector. In fact, the digital camera I bought was only the third camera I've owned in thirty years of photography. Even if it wasn't impressive, I thought it might be interesting.

I went out photographing, partly to see what the camera could do, but mostly to see what *I* would do differently – that is to say, how the camera would change *me*. As such, my comments here are not really about digital photography or the boring debate pro or con, but rather about my creative response to a new tool as I began playing around with it.

Playing Around More

In the last ten years I've become a lot more conservative about exposing film. I know, inherently, that with every exposure I've committed myself to considerable necessary work – film processing, contact proofing, proof printing, and eventually printing final images, and I've said nothing about negative storage and management, database maintenance, or filing. Knowing that each exposure generates a commitment to such efforts, I've found myself becoming more selective in what I choose to photograph. In some regards, this may be good; I'm not wasting so much time with trivial subjects or frequently trodden compositions. On the other hand, I also find myself less willing to be playful or to experiment with totally new ideas. I'm not lazy – I prefer to think I'm *practical*.

I know that I only have a finite amount of time to spend in the darkroom and I'd rather spend that time producing "serious work" than playing around with ideas, most of which will prove to be totally fruitless.

Playing with my digital camera, though, is different. Where there is no film and no developing, no contact proofing and no proof printing, I found myself freed, psychologically, to experiment and play and try new images and new ways of seeing. True, most of these are still fruitless experiments. But the point is, where my commitment to experiment is as simple as looking at an image on my computer screen – without any film processing, without any film expense, without any proof printing – I'm more willing and more able to be playful, even more creative. In fact, almost immediately I found some interesting trends and possibilities in these images that I know I would likely never have discovered without allowing myself to simply play.

Sheer Volume

Ah, but you say, it's the quality of the final picture, not the quantity of exposures that counts. This is certainly true when it comes to the final presentation in the gallery or a book – as it were, *finishing* photographs. But, I don't think it's true in the process of *making* pictures. In fact, I suspect it's exactly the opposite. People

who make lots and lots of exposures are more likely to come up with really good ones than people who make just a few. Creatively and psychologically I resist this notion – I'd like to think that genius is available upon command. But mathematically I know the statistics cannot be denied. Anyone who brackets their exposures or exposes a backup sheet of film knows the advantages of statistical quantity.

When I shoot sheet film, a good week will usually result in about 100 exposed sheets of film. When I shoot roll film, a good week of photography will result in, maybe, 40 rolls – 320 images with my 6x9. Recently, in five days of photography in North Dakota, I returned with 1800 exposures. My friend who was with me on this trip, photographing with his 4x5 view camera, exposed 120 sheets of film. His may be better than mine or vice versa – who knows? The one thing I do know with certainty is that the digital camera changed the way I worked – substantially.

Spontaneous Fluidity

With the view camera I tend to work slowly, methodically, carefully. This is great and a technique I both enjoy and have been successful with. With the digital camera I noticed almost immediately that I tended to work quickly, spontaneously, reactively. With the view camera when something caught my eye, I'd study

it, walk around it, visualize, crop, mull it over. With the digital camera when something catches my eye I photograph it, repeatedly, responding intuitively without any intellectualizing whatsoever – other than the obvious technical questions that have to be resolved. These approaches make different pictures, neither better than the other, but clearly different. The tool changes the way I see.

Field Proofs

In 1990, I acquired a Polaroid back for my view camera. I was anxious to try an experiment in the field that I'd seen commercial photographers use with consistency – Polaroid proofs that provide immediate and instantaneous feedback while photographing. Until then, my only ability to create a proof was back in the darkroom after the film was developed and long after the photographing session had concluded. Using Polaroid materials in the field gave me the ability to have instantaneous feedback about what I had my camera pointed at, at a time when I could still make a change in the image. I find the process facilitating and productive from a *creative* point of view. It's also messy and expensive from a *logistical* point of view. Dealing with Polaroid waste materials in the field (a friend of mine calls them "Polarinds") is a mess. Dealing with sulfate clearing baths to preserve my Polaroid negatives was goopy and impractical.

And now, with a digital camera I find I have that in-the-field feedback, but without the mess nor the expense. The ability to make a photograph and then instantly see it in two-dimensions, albeit on a tiny screen, has an influence on the way I see. I suppose I could even take a laptop computer with me into the field, but I haven't tried that yet.

"Weather" Or Not To Photograph

Earlier this fall I went out photographing with a group of friends to the rainforest on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State. My friends, all with 4x5 cameras and backpacks full of equipment, film holders and spot meters, found photographing in the wind and the rain a difficult and cumbersome process. It takes time to set up a view camera, a process that is exacerbated in wind and rain. In contrast, between rain showers I was able to hop out of the car with my digital camera, set it on the tripod and make a dozen photographs before the next squall blew through. Working quickly, I was able to create in weather conditions that were less than ideal.

That night as we sat around the fireplace at the lodge comparing notes from the day's photographic work, the inevitable question popped up: How many sheets did you expose today? One fellow had made nine exposures, another six, a third twelve. And then someone asked me

how many exposures I had made. When I responded that I'd made 283 exposures one fellow commented "Yes, but with that toy camera you won't be able to make any decent prints." Before the trip, I'd made some digital negatives with images from this camera and brought a few gelatin silver prints with me to share my early test results. I showed him my 8x10" contact prints and an interesting discussion followed. After critical examination of these 8x10" photographs we all concluded that they looked, for all practical reasons, as good as a contact print made from an 8x10" view camera negative! They were tack sharp, full of detail, with very smooth tones and absolutely no digital artifact. I've known, intellectually, that digital photography might someday have the potential to challenge film-based photography when it comes to image results, but, quite honestly, I had no idea we had come this far this quickly.

I still have more experimenting to do and different subjects to test to be able to jump on board with *complete* enthusiasm – but, I will say that my early tests are encouraging and that I might just be able to make some gallery-quality, albeit small prints with this camera.

Real-time creativity in the digital darkroom

I've spent years developing my craft and learning the nuances of the Zone System.

I can develop an N+4 negative with the best of them and occasionally, when pressed, even succeed at an N-5. I can print well and am equally comfortable with graded papers and divided developers. I know how to do contrast masks, print with a tilted enlarger head, employ high acutance film developers and own enough Kodak gelatin wrattern filters to make my own rainbows. I know how to bleach with a Q-tip and use red creosene dye on my negatives. In short, I've been around the workshop circuit for twenty-five years.

And then there's Adobe Photoshop. Where Ansel Adams taught us the nine-zone system, Photoshop gives us the 256-step grayscale. I'm awfully good with spot tone; but I'm infinitely better with the healing brush. This list could go on. Most importantly, I find that I am enjoying the printing process (that is to say, the "image finessing process") in Photoshop far more than the "test and guess" method in a traditional wet darkroom. Again, to focus on my *creative process* rather than on the technology, I find working with an image in visual real-time on the computer is a completely different experience than the bifurcated "print/process then analyze" sequence in the darkroom. On the computer I dodge or burn, change contrast or crop and have immediate, emotional and sensory reactions to the image on the screen. I find this more intuitive and

reactive instead of the more intellectual process I experience in the darkroom.

There's no question that many people prefer the darkroom and that's perfectly justifiable. I know that many people prefer the computer and that also is justifiable. Some just *hate* the computer and that's more than justifiable! Analog or digital tools are a matter of creative choice. Fine prints can and will continue to be made with analog equipment. I am now comfortable saying that fine prints can and will be made with digital tools, too. This is not a debate about right or wrong. But, as I'm beginning to learn, there are powerful reasons for me to not be prejudiced against the digital camera and the digital darkroom's creative possibilities. Hammers are great for nails and wrenches great for bolts. But as the old maxim reminds us, "When your only tool is a hammer, the whole world looks like a nail."

Conclusions – at least tentative ones

Before there was the wheel it would have been difficult to imagine the wagon. Before there was language it would have been impossible to conceive of poetry. Similarly, I cannot imagine what possibili-

ties lie through the door of making digital images, but I do now recognize it as a door beyond which lie possibilities that are as unthinkable to us as was the 16x20" gelatin silver print might have been to the daguerreotypist of the 19th Century. Like all doors, there is the choice as to whether or not one chooses to pass through them. Having glimpsed how playing with a digital camera has given me new ways to relate to the world photographically, I recognize this as a door that I will have to think about a great deal more critically, more carefully as this technology evolves. I say this not because the technology is so interesting, but because of the way the technology is influencing the way I see and think and react to images as I work on them that is so challenging and intriguing. Just as the 35mm camera allows us to see and photograph differently than a view camera, so a digital camera allows me to see and photograph differently than my monorail. It will be fun to see what develops – no pun intended!



BASIC ELEMENTS



by

D. Fokos

David Fokos



PHOTOGRAPHING THE NOT-SO GRAND LANDSCAPE

The Long and the Short of It

by

Joe Lipka

Was it a vacation? Backpacking a 5 x 7 camera, tripod, film holders, and the necessary paraphernalia does not qualify as a “vacation.” I was happy to get back home to rest.

“So, how long did you spend photographing on your vacation?”

I had just returned from traveling 4,000 air miles and 1,400 driving miles during a seven-and-a-half day photographic adventure through Wyoming.

“About a minute and a half, and that was only because I had two 30-second exposures.”

The response, while humorous, was accurate. After a week of photography, that doesn’t seem like a lot. But when your life is divided into thirtieths and sixtieths of a second, that is an awful lot of photography – especially with a view camera. Within that little bit of humor, however, was a pretty interesting thought. That thought, grounded in the humor of exaggeration, relates the long and short of landscape, the grand and the not-so-grand of landscape.

In photographing the grand landscape, the scale is tremendous. Photographs can include many, many miles from horizon to horizon. To change a viewpoint significantly, you have to pack up the camera and move a few miles. After you travel miles to change the

EVELYN'S



by

Scott C. Campbell

Scott C. Campbell



INTERVIEW WITH ADAM JAHIEL

Editor's Note: Adam Jahiel's photographic path has led to the sort of artistic life most would envy. He's had big-city experience, top-notch mentoring, worldly adventure, and is now happily settled outside the tiny town of Story, Wyoming. And, he's loving it. We wanted to learn more about this photographer who has walked such a diverse creative path.

Brooks Jensen: In addition to the “cowboy” work featured in this issue, I understand that you're also trained in commercial photography and photojournalism?

Adam Jahiel: That's right. I went to Brooks Institute of Photography and earned a degree in commercial photography. I've done everything from industrial photography to commercial illustration to photojournalism to audio/visual. My mentor at Brooks, who was the photojournalism teacher, suggested that I continue my studies and attend the University of Missouri and study with Amos McDougal, who was running the program at that time. There I earned another degree – this time in photojournalism.

THE LAST COWBOY



by

Adam Jahiel

Adam Jahiel



The LensWork Folios



The French Ridge, Mount Hastings, Alaska, 1964

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BRADFORD WASHBURN

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by Bradford Washburn



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LSS-028 Glasses & Testament, Pioneer Shack, North Dakota, 2003

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In addition, this group of images is a special example that is worth seeing because they were photographed with a digital camera. If you have been interested to see what is possible with the combined hybrid technologies of digital photography with traditional wet darkroom printing, there is no better example than these three sample prints!

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