

HORIZON NEWS #30

NEWS, THOUGHTS AND IMAGES FROM HORIZON PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOPS

There is one thing the photograph must contain: the humanity of the moment. This kind of photography is realism. But realism is not enough – there has to be vision, and the two together can make a good photograph.

Robert Frank

STUDENT PHOTO: CLOSE-UP



Fifty years ago, a young Swiss photographer, Robert Frank, published a small but highly influential book, *The Americans*. The 50th anniversary of the publication of this book is celebrated in a traveling exhibition now at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. Looking at Frank's images, you are sure to be struck by their technical ineptness. Bad exposures, extreme grain, horizon askew, subjects out of focus, unbalanced compositions. So what made Frank a legendary photographer? Here are some possible explanations:

>He documented Americans with a gritty, intense, unsentimental eye. Emotional substance trumps technique.

>His sober message was a counterpoint to the smug, self-congratulatory 1950s. Most photographers idealize subjects—people, landscapes, products, etc. Capturing the “reality” of a subject, even harshly, can be refreshing.

>Frank's subjects feel “real” in part because he got in very close...yet you never feel his subjects were reacting to his presence. He had that rare ability to be in his subject's face without calling attention to himself.

>Frank's images have variety—of subjects, approaches, etc.—so the book never bores. A photo book should be like a symphony: a consistent perspective binds it together like a musical “key,” but it doesn't keep repeating a similar melody.

>Frank was a disciplined, even fanatical, editor of his own work. His book contains 83 images...culled from the 27,000 he shot! To hold people's attention, he knew you should show your best stuff...and not too much of it.

That brings us to this wonderful Frank-like image. In capturing this loud, aggressive fellow at a Chesapeake City party, **Alaina Gray** made technical mistakes, but her shot is emotionally pitch-perfect. “How my flash mixed with ambient light was accidental,” Alaina confessed. (No doubt Frank benefitted from many a happy accident.) What wasn't accidental was Alaina getting in close and catching the moment of maximum energy. Pow!

For those who like self-assignments: like Frank, document some aspect of the “real world” as you perceive it?

ANNOUNCEMENTS

>We have begun to post next year's schedule; check our website for dates. Our complete 2010 schedule should be completed in the next three weeks.

>New offerings: **Video Basics** with **Tom Sullivan** (many still cameras now have video capability.) Lou Manna will be offering four workshops in and around his Manhattan studio: **Studio Lighting; Food; Events;** and “**NYC: Landmarks & Street Scenes.**” (Details will be posted on our website soon.)

>Want to earn **free workshop time**? Director Steve Gottlieb needs help at Horizon's HQ. Call Steve.

QUICK TIPS: VARIATIONS ON A THEME



We return once again to a favorite subject: variations on a theme. We're continually intrigued with the number of different ways there are to shoot the same subject. More than anything else, this reveals the inherent creativity at the heart of the process of seeing with a camera.

Here we have three shots by two photographers of a "simple" subject. (**Ken Falls**, left and center; **Jim Auerbach**, right) Consider the many variables at work: f.stop, focal length, background, white balance, camera angle and reflector position. See if you can "deconstruct" (or reverse engineer) the photos to determine what choices Ken and Jim made for these shots.

When you find a subject that interests you, keep exploring its visual possibilities until you feel you've really squeezed out all you can. And don't forget your trusty tripod. Not only will it help pictures sharpness but, using a self-timer, your hands are free to hold a reflector so you won't need an assistant.

When we look at most variations-on-a-theme we generally have a clear preference. Here we can honestly say, we love 'em all equally.

END FRAME



The New Yorker magazine runs a weekly contest in which one of their cartoonists creates an illustration and readers submit captions to go with it. We're not holding a contest but, New Yorker-like, we thought you might have fun generating a caption to accompany this picture taken by **Vicky Dixon** of her husband, Jesse, "chained" to an old steel buoy. (Is this a test of your sense of humor, or perhaps a Rorschach test about your feelings about marriage?) Photographically goofing around like this with your partner can create very special memories.