

HORIZON NEWS #60

IMAGES, THOUGHTS AND NEWS FROM HORIZON PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOPS

"Talent is only the starting point."

Irving Berlin

Talent in Photography: An Initial List

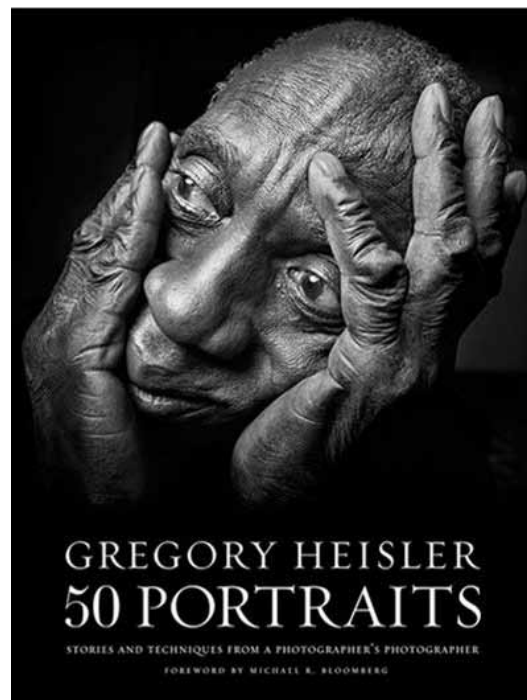
Students have often asked me who my favorite photographers are. I've always replied, "There are so many I don't know where to start—and the names on my list aren't likely to ring a bell." My answer is honest, but altogether useless. So for those who asked, here's my initial list: four talented and dedicated people in the photography world whom I hold in highest regard...for dramatically different reasons.

#1. Gregory Heisler. Simply put, a photographic genius. He's been understandably labeled "the photographer's photographer." In reviewing his recent book, *Gregory Heisler: 50 Portraits*, Shutterbug magazine quoted one observer (without attribution): "He has the mind of a scientist, the heart of a journalist, and the eye of an artist." Having heard him speak several times, I would add that he has the wit of a comedian, the mental speed of a top game show contestant and the energy of a kid on sugar high.

Heisler doesn't have a particular photographic style. (I define "style" as having self-imitation at its core.) Rather, he brings to each assignment a breadth of visual approaches. Instead of imposing a "Heisler look," he dexterously applies a seemingly unlimited variety of techniques—from the most complex to the most elemental—to powerfully communicate to viewers his perception of his subjects. His book is devoted to portraits, but his range goes well beyond. The one constant: subject-driven images that hit you between the eyes—they make you think and feel.

I've had the pleasure of chatting with Greg several times. On one of those occasions, I was carrying a poster of one of my photos. He asked if he might have it. Some time later, I learned from an assistant I hired who also worked for Greg that he'd hung my poster in his studio. A singular honor.

#2. O. Winston Link. Link's reputation is based entirely on photos of a single subject—trains, mostly steam trains of the Norfolk & Western line—taken during a relatively brief period—the mid to late 1950s. In that relatively short time span, Link produced a series of jaw-dropping black and white photos which required staggering technical prowess and perfect timing (the trains were frequently moving). Many of his most powerful pictures were taken at night; illuminating a long train—and the steam from its engine—often required more than forty flashbulbs, all going off simultaneously (see photo of Link and assistant). The bulbs were joined in an electrical series, so the failure of any one would ruin the shot...and if Link missed his shot, he couldn't back the train up for another try. Each shot took days of planning and the most complex equipment set-ups. In many of his best pictures, Link thoughtfully incorporated foreground elements—often people—to create complex, moody and impeccable compositions. >>>



Link probably produced fewer exposures in the entire decade of the 1950s than many of today's amateurs do in a single week of vacation. But the great photographers, even the most prolific ones, are generally defined and remembered for just a handful of their most iconic images. A handful of Link's best images are the premier visuals of railroad's golden age. I recently visited the exciting Link Museum in Roanoke, Virginia. Dedicated exclusively to Link's work, that visit reinforced my long-held belief that no one was better at consistently combining brilliant technique, amazing pre-visualization and the ultimate in dedication.

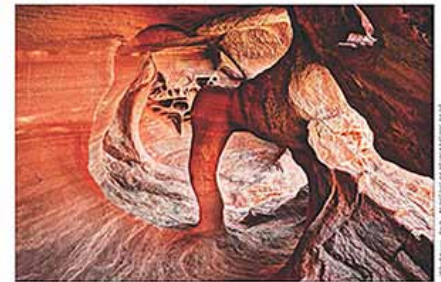
3. Robert Hitchman. For six years, I've led workshops in the western U.S., each one to a different location. Changing locations enables me—and the students who regularly join me—to explore new places. To create a successful itinerary for each "Western Adventures," I do a considerable amount of advance research in addition to scouting each location. My starting point is always the newsletters of photographer Robert Hitchman. In Hitchman's own words:

"*Photograph America Newsletter* is a 12-page travel newsletter for photographers, published since 1989. Each issue...describes in detail where to photograph spectacular landscapes, interesting wildlife, hidden waterfalls, remote beaches, slot canyons, colorful wildflowers of North America."

Hitchman's website, www.photographamerica.com, reveals that he seems to have been EVERYWHERE in the United States...at least everywhere that landscape and nature photographers might want to go. With precision and enthusiasm, he shares his encyclopedic knowledge, observations and insights—photo-graphic and otherwise. His photos illustrating the various locations offer an accurate flavor of what you'll discover. Hitchman is akin to those early western scouts, Kit Carson and Jim Bridger, who cut a trail that makes life easier and more fruitful for those of us who follow in his footsteps. He is a national treasure.

4. George Shaub. What does it take to be a successful photo magazine editor? Not much. You must understand and appreciate the photography universe, past, present and future. You must know how to write, have something to say and take pictures that effectively illustrate your articles. You must attract ideas for magazine material from a variety of sources; at the same time, you must know which ideas to reject, without discouraging future idea submissions. You must have the knack for hiring, and hold onto, superior writer/photographers and staffers. You must be able to edit others' material. You must keep up with a torrent of technical developments. You must participate in major industry events to promote your magazine's visibility. You must maintain positive relations with advertisers without sacrificing editorial independence. You must have a sense of design and layout...and know when change is needed. You must get along with your publisher...he signs the checks. Last, but not least, you must understand your readers...and give them what they want.

How many people embrace all those varied talents? Surely not many. George Shaub is one. For the past 13 years, he's been editorial director of *Shutterbug*. [Full disclosure: *Shutterbug* has given me some favorable attention over the years...but George has rejected some of my article ideas, too.] How George effectively juggles all those responsibilities, month after month, is truly astonishing. Steve Gottlieb



RETURN TO THE VALLEY OF FIRE

Since I photographed the Valley of Fire, Nevada's largest state park, for Newsletter #45, in 1997, I have been returning for more photo explorations every time I drive through southern Nevada. I realized the fantastical rock formations and spectacular red sandstone landscapes needed more coverage. Park rangers have been helpful with information about remote and seldom-visited features of the park. Chatting with photographers on the trails often helps me find new locations. I've been recording GPS coordinates to mark new discoveries. Here are some locations



FLUSH: Celebrating Bathrooms Past & Present, by Steve Gottlieb, has just arrived...literally. The delivery truck couldn't navigate its way in our little town, so today we went to the truck depot and loaded up our car. Copies will be available very soon...at the Summit...on Amazon (keywords: Gottlieb + Flush)...or contact us directly.



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