

No. 20 • February 1998



LENSWORK

O U A R T E R L Y

Essays, Articles and Portfolios on Photography and the Creative Process



Essays

A. D. Coleman • Brooks Jensen

Portfolios

Enzo Cei • Howard Schatz • Stephen F. Procko

WELCOME TO *LENSWORK QUARTERLY* IN PDF

LensWork began publishing in September, 1993 as a local magazine in Portland, Oregon. The original vision of the publishers was to issue *LensWork* monthly in a modest size, funded entirely by advertising support. The first four issues were 24-pages, 8½" x 11" format. They were distributed to about 1,000 photographers in the Pacific Northwest.

Shortly after this modest beginning it became apparent that *LensWork* had found a niche market; it also became apparent that the publication could be underwritten by subscriptions moreso than advertising. Beginning with issue #5, *LensWork* was converted to a quarterly format and renamed *LensWork Quarterly*. The new quarterly was completely redesigned as a 90+ page paperback book. Since then, the publication has been offered on a national and international subscription basis, and is available in more than 700 retail outlets.

With Issue #13 — Spring 1996 — *LensWork Quarterly* was redesigned once again; in

addition to the literary content we began to publish photographic portfolios. The paper stock was necessarily changed to accept finer printing — the most noticeable change was the new photo cover.

You are now reading *LensWork* in its most exciting evolution — as an Adobe Acrobat® Portable Document Format available on the World Wide Web. Because the articles and essays in *LensWork* are not time sensitive like traditional magazines, the demand for back issues has been ongoing. In an effort to make back issues continuously available (even after the paper-based issues are sold out) we have published each issue of *LensWork Quarterly* in this paperless Adobe Acrobat® format — a method of publishing that allows each issue to be available indefinitely to new readers. For additional information on this format, tips on reading this Adobe Acrobat® PDF, and other information specific to the electronic publishing of *LensWork Quarterly*, [click here to jump to the Appendix pages.](#)

The following pages of this Adobe Acrobat® PDF Document are recreated to approximate the original paper-based *LensWork Quarterly* #20, which was published in February 1998. Some minor modifications in layout have been adapted from the original to better fit this computer document format.

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including the LensWork WWW On-line Gallery,
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and information on the LensWork Workshops.

The premise of LENSWORK QUARTERly is that photography is more than mere craft. Photography is, or can be, a way of life. Beyond cameras and equipment, beyond film and chemistry lie the mysteries of the creative life shared by those who strive to communicate and express themselves clearly — fine art photographers, commercial photographers, amateurs and professionals.

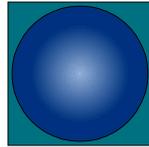
LENSWORK QUARTERly is an exploration of the path of creative photography. Through an exchange of ideas, insight, personal experience and opinions it is hoped LENSWORK QUARTERly will inspire photographic artists to create work which truly bears their signature.

The focus of LENSWORK QUARTERly is *ideas* rather than *images*, imagination rather than imitation, and an understanding of photography beyond craft. Images are published only as portfolios of art or to illustrate the concepts expressed in the articles. For those looking for a more image-based or technically oriented publication, we refer you to one of the many photographic books or magazines currently available.

We are pleased to offer editorial from nationally recognized photographers and writers. We're equally delighted to publish articles or portfolios from our readers. If you are interested in submitting an article or portfolio for consideration in a future issue, please send a self-addressed, stamped envelope for submission guidelines.

LENSWORK

Q U A R T E R L Y



*Essays, Articles and Portfolios
on Photography
and the Creative Process*

Number 20

February 1998

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ISSN #1075-5624

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Printed in the U.S.A.

LENSWORK Publishing
PO Box 22007
Portland, Oregon 97269-2007

EMail editor@lenswork.com
Web site at www.lenswork.com

FEBRUARY 1998

LENSWORK QUARTERLY #20

LensWork Quarterly (ISSN 1075-5624) is published four times yearly by LensWork Publishing, PO Box 22007, Portland, OR 97269-2007. Subscriptions are available within the United States for \$29 for 1-year (four issues) or \$55 for 2-years (eight issues). Canada and Mexico subscription rates are \$39 for 1-year (four issues) or \$75 for 2-years (eight issues). Overseas subscription rates are \$49 for 1-year (four issues) or \$95 for 2-years (eight issues). Application to mail at Periodicals Postage Rates is Pending at Portland, Oregon. Postmaster: Send address changes to LensWork Publishing, PO Box 22007, Portland, OR 97269-2007.

Distributed by:

Ingram Periodicals
1240 Heil Quaker Blvd.
La Vergne, TN 37086
800-627-6247, FAX 615-793-6043

Small Changes

PO Box 19046
Seattle, WA 98109
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As photographers we select tools — as all artists must — that serve to make our art. While this may sound simplistic, we are as dependent on our tools as we are on our eyes. To replace or add new tools is to change our vision. Our editor stands at this frightening (yet exciting) precipice, and prepares to take the leap.



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The Matter With Subject Matter

You've undoubtedly noticed the trends that ripple through photography, perhaps dabbling with one or more yourself. The seduction to reproduce what's been done before may be a worthwhile exercise, but in the long-run is a sad foreshortening of creative vision. Unfortunately, we see it all the time. The meaningful lesson that is learned from the Masters is to simply look at the world with renewed interest.

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EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Tools



I am thinking about purchasing a new camera and am traumatized by the process.

Worse yet, I was surprised that thinking about a new camera system was such a traumatic combination of thoughts. I was so fascinated by my own fears of buying a new camera system — once I had acknowledged them — that I couldn't help but wonder what these fears were all about. The thought and the questions started me thinking about *tools*.

In the normal way of thinking, the tool is simply a device that the mind uses to amplify itself. We use a microphone and amplifier to increase the volume of our voice and the tool gives us the power to communicate beyond the limitations of the human body. The automobile is a tool that allows us to travel across vast distances, again overcoming the limitations of the

human body. The screw driver is a tool that concentrates the power in our hands to the point of impact of a screw. Normally speaking, this use of tools dominates the way we think about them — they are simply a means of taking our own thoughts and activities and amplifying them, perhaps using them more efficiently, or more powerfully. The objective is defined by previous thought and the tool helps turn this thought into a reality. This kind of use for the tool — for the camera — does not, essentially, provide me any discomfort. But there is another way in which tools affect our lives.

Tools are not only a means to amplify our own minds. They are, in fact, devices that *change and affect our thought processes*. For example, I learned years ago when I first got involved in the world of computing that learning a piece of software so one could do a specific task was, in fact,

exactly backwards much of the time. As an alternative, I found it a much better strategy to learn a piece of software *with no particular objective in mind*. Then, once the software was reasonably grasped, the knowledge of how to use it opened up unforeseen possibilities for the creation of new products and new results that could not possibly have been imagined prior to knowing the software. In essence, the software changed the way I think! This is the often invisible *power* of tools.

This idea has been well-documented and discussed at length in relationship to photography. Think how the introduction of the hand-held camera changed the way photographers looked at the world. Think of how the introduction of roll film changed the way photographers could relate to the world and particularly in regards to travel and photography of more exotic locations. Tools change the way we think, change the way we perceive, change the way we produce, and change the way *and direction* of our progress. This is what traumatizes me about purchasing a new camera system.

The camera I currently use for the vast majority of my photography is an old, pre-World War II Arca Swiss monorail medium-format camera that shoots 6 by 9 cm

images on 120 film. For a view camera, it's quite portable, but does have all the limitations that view cameras normally have: it's bulky, it requires a tripod, it's a slow process to make any image, and requires considerable precision and attention in the simple act of focusing the lens. I have become comfortable with all these procedures, and this camera has dominated my work for the last twenty years.

The reason I am thinking of abandoning this as my primary camera is that it is best used as a "safari-camera," and by that I mean that I am out in the world, with the camera, dedicated to doing photography and *only* photography. When I go out to photograph, I pack up the camera, several boxes of accessories, film, a dark cloth, the view camera lenses, my camera vest and fill my trunk with gear. Then I head out into the landscape, or small town America, or some other locale of interest and begin the process of looking for a photograph. Because I am "on safari" this kind of work is best done when I have several days to dedicate to photograph. The long weekend, the week's vacation, the extended trip have been a primary source for photographing. When I was younger, I had the time to regularly go out into the world and photograph this way. Now that I am

older, and involved in other activities — particularly in my role as editor and publisher of LensWork — I find I have significantly less time for this kind of safari activity. Instead, my ability to find time for photography now faces a challenge. It seems that whenever I have the camera — on those rare occasions when I do get out — the conditions, subject matter, light, or my mind may not be conducive to making the kinds of images I would like to. On the other hand, when the light is right, the inspiration whetted, and the moment in front of me, I never seem to have a camera! The tool I have used for all these years is no longer functional for the vision I have. I now need a camera that goes with me everywhere, every day, and is with me when I see a photograph and have only minutes or hours to photograph.

So, I am searching for a new tool. But, here is the rub: I know that the kinds of tools I'm considering are going to change my imagery, change the way I see the world, change my well-defined and comfortable photographic perspective — *and this terrifies me*. What will I see with a hand-held camera? How will my perception of the world change with an auto-focus tool? My God, comfort zones are powerful prisons!

Once I began to think about this innate fear, I realized how absolutely necessary it is for me to make this leap. The very fact that my eye has been so trained by my camera is almost an indictment of my single-camera strategy over the last twenty years. There is something about simply having a new tool that gives the mind permission to think in ways that it previously didn't. The mind would not otherwise allow itself to do so. This unwillingness of the mind to engage change eventually results in a frustration and even a lack of vision.

Tools also have a unique characteristic of being used by different people to such different ends. The tool is not only a means for a person to create, but also a means by which the character of the tool-user is revealed. The craftsman uses the tool, and the tool shapes and fashions the craftsman. Some people can take a tool and turn its use into something wonderful and others use the same tool and produce something that isn't. This, also, is a key to my resistance to a new tool. I know, intuitively, that the photographic success I've had with my old tools may not translate smoothly or at all with a new tool. I've developed a certain reputation for being a photographer of some accomplishment — at least in the minds of some —

but if I pick up a new tool and it reveals a different character in me, I might expose a side of myself that is a failure photographically. I might stumble and damage my precious reputation. At least, that's what the self-conscious mind thinks.

The truth is, of course, that this fear is the great enemy of the creative life. Intellectually at least, I know that my engaging a new tool may present challenges, but it is absolutely necessary. In fact, it is the very definition of the process we call the creative life. Without the challenge of learning a new tool, and thereby learning a bit more about ourselves, the creative life is stifled. The camera is simply an extension of my mind. It is a vehicle to communicate. Each camera, each set of tools, contains its own inherent grammar in that communication. I know that when I abandon my monorail and pick up a hand-held camera that I will need to learn a new grammar, a new way of seeing, a new way of communicating. My deepest fear is that I might find I have nothing to communicate. Of course, the self-defeating logic contained in this idea is simply that if I don't pick up the new camera and I don't begin seeing the world in a new way that I will not communicate at all. Not communicating is functionally the same as not having anything to communi-

cate. As Mark Twain said, "Those who don't read have no advantage over those who can't."

It's not that I'm set in stone. I understand the value of change and looking at the world through new eyes. For example, I regularly browse through stores that have nothing to do with my interests or regular routines. I wander through, say, a fabric store just to see if there are ideas or products there that might be solutions for something in my life that has nothing to do with sewing. In a barbecue store, I found a fantastic print-flattening weight in the form of a cast iron barbecue griddle. It's a big, hefty, flat piece of rolled steel with turned-up edges. Perfect for the darkroom; but found in the barbecue store, of all places! Who would guess?

I know this technique of looking for the unexpected solution in the unexpected location — I know it because I use it in other areas. I guess it's just about time I applied this knowledge to the purchase of a new camera.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

CAVATORI (QUARRYMEN)



by

Enzo Cei

Enzo Cei

My story with the marble quarrymen spans a time from 1985 to the publication of the book *Cavatori* in 1993.

I remember well when I first went to take a look at a marble quarry; the strength and impressiveness emanating from the place; the silence and total stillness of a non-working day. Little-by-little I got to know the light of those mountains and the character of the men, which had been formed in their toil with nature.

White marble has been extracted from this part of Tuscany for 2,000 years. Man has always looked to marble when wanting to affirm his own value and his own greatness, both in the construction of important long-lasting works and in sculpture as “works of art.”

I have learned many things about the “cultivation” of the quarries; becoming involved in this work — which has the feeling of a mission — made me feel closer to those who, with their marked faces and hands, can still offer the oldest and most real values.

On leafing through the book, a quarry foreman commented, “All our hard work is in here.”

These few words are — amongst all the others — the “review” I prefer. I’m reminded of the solidarity I found despite all my “excesses.” Although I hampered or obstructed their work at times, they obliged my desire to make the right photograph at the decisive moment.



ANALOGIZING THE DIGITAL

Issues for A Medium in Transition

by

A. D. Coleman

Editor's note: This is the slightly-edited text of the keynote lecture delivered at the symposium "Photojob oder Photoshop," organized and sponsored by the Arbeitskreis Photographie, Hamburg, Germany, August 30, 1997.



Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I was asked to draft a keynote talk that would address the issues of ethics, politics and philosophy relevant to the technology of digital imaging in photography. Even given several hours' more time here today, it would be impossible to explore any one of those three complex issues thoroughly. So I will make a few introductory comments on photographers' relationships to this new technology, and then raise three relevant points in each of those three subject areas — ethics, politics, and philosophy — as provocations for the rest of our discourse today.

Next spring I will publish a collection of thirty years' worth of my writings on electronic communication and digital

imagery. That book is titled *The Digital Evolution*, a title chosen to indicate my belief that this new technology grew organically out of previous media and earlier concepts. I would propose to you that the parent here, the preceding model in visual communication, was none other than photography. That is, digital photography specifically, and digital imaging tools and programs generally, have the darkroom rather than the painter's or sculptor's atelier as their point of origin and conceptual framework.

One can of course generate non-photographic visual images from scratch with this technology. But the collage and montage techniques that are fundamental to these methods emerged with the birth

PASSION & LINE



by



Howard Schatz

I learned very quickly that if a photograph of a dancer were to communicate something rich and have a certain visual aesthetic — let alone be compelling or unique — it had to come from its own performance. A dancer must condense and project the energy from a movement, with the sum of its physical and emotional intensity, into the split-second that the film is exposed.

The men and women who appear in *Passion & Line* taught me, and I taught them. We collaborated to create the “performance” that resulted in the photographs. Together we worked, reaching for the moment, yelling to push it, extending limbs beyond their reach, jumping to “pop” it, suffering for it, exaggerating it, physically screaming to attain it. There were exceptions, of course — still moments, quiet poses created for a beautiful, graphic design. But mostly there are no flat feet, no still limbs, no relaxed muscles. Even the portraits were made for their physical energy as well as their emotional intensity.

It was very hard work. I told each dancer that when it was easy, it had probably been done before, probably many times. I explained that only when it was so hard that it was nearly impossible were we perhaps close to something unique and extraordinary. They got it.

No one, in my experience as a photographer — not a fashion model, nor an actor, nor a musician — works harder, stays more focused, gives of him or herself more completely than a dancer. No one.



THE MATTER WITH SUBJECT MATTER

by

Brooks Jensen



I was recently doing a bit of research by scanning through and taking some measurements in each of the 200 or so photography books that I own. The purpose of this project was to compile some information about book design. I examined each book without paying much attention to the images or the subject matter, but rather looking at page layouts and other such non-photographic aspects of these publications.

I was about three-quarters through my library of books when it suddenly occurred to me that I kept seeing the same subject matter over and over and over again. I got bugged by this idea, so I began the scan of my bookshelves a second time, looking this time at subject matters only. I was amazed to see how frequently I saw the same subject matter

A PORTFOLIO



by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen F. Procko', written in a cursive style.

Stephen F. Procko



Tumacacori #1
1997
Southern Arizona

Appendix

Subscribing to *LensWork Quarterly* Formats & Availability

LensWork Quarterly is published four times a year — Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter issues. The information below describes the various formats and availability of *LensWork Quarterly*.

Paper format

Each issue of *LensWork Quarterly* is printed in a 96-page paperback book format on bright white, 80-pound paper.

A limited edition only is printed to fulfill the needs of our subscribers, distributors, retailers and a few on-hand back issue quantities.

Paper back issues are available from our offices while supplies last. When these are gone, they are *not* reprinted.

Subscriptions (Paper only)

One and two year subscriptions are available in the USA as follows:

- \$29 for 1-year *
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Call or fax for overseas rates.

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The paperback book format is available in book stores, photographic supply stores and other retail outlets around the country. The retail price is \$8.95 per issue. If you are a retailer and would like to offer *LensWork Quarterly* to your customers, our distributor is Ingram Periodicals Distributing. Call them or our office for additional information.

Back issues

Some retailers keep unsold copies and make them available as back issues until they are sold out. Back issues are also available from LensWork until sold out for \$8.95 per issue plus \$2 each shipping & handling. Back issues are *not* reprinted.

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