

Why Choose LensWork?

"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*



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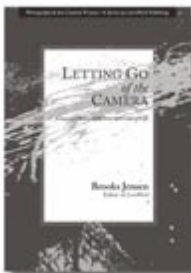
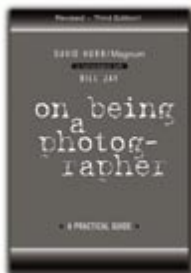
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New Wynn Bullock 10 Image *LensWork Folio* *Gelatin silver images*



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LENSWORK

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

No. 55 Oct - Nov 2004



Article
Brooks Jensen

Quotes for
photographers

Portfolios
Wynn Bullock

Mario DiGirolamo
Gregory Scott

EndNotes
by **Bill Jay**

LENSWORK

55
OCT — NOV
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Photography and the Creative Process
Articles • Interviews • Portfolios

Editors
Brooks Jensen
Maureen Gallagher

In this issue

Article by
Brooks Jensen

Our favorite
Quotes for Photographers

Portfolios by
Wynn Bullock
Mario DiGirolamo
Gregory Scott

EndNotes by **Bill Jay**

— ■ TABLE OF CONTENTS ■ —

7

Editor's Comment

The Two Competing Roles of Editing

Editors and curators often edit backwards for historical content (and value), while artists should edit forwards to find their artistic direction. Editing aside, the element of dumb luck plays a large part in the achievement of fame.

11

Portfolio: Wynn Bullock

Rare and Unknown Bullock



32

Quotes for Photographers

Although from many different creative endeavors, this collection of thoughts still speaks directly to photographic artists.

*Holiday Gift Guide
Starts on Page 86!*

39

Portfolio: Gregory Scott

Impositions



61

Brooks Jensen

On Faith & Fame

When the role of the editor is examined closely, it becomes evident that publishers, exhibitors, and museums have a completely different task in editing than artists do when they edit their own work.

69

Portfolio: Mario DiGirolamo

Sole E Ombra: Images of Italy



84

End Notes by Bill Jay

EDITOR'S COMMENTS



The Two Competing Roles of Editing

Sometime, somewhere, someone is going to edit your work. Maybe a gallery has decided to give you an exhibition; maybe a publisher is making a monograph of your work; maybe your heirs are sorting your life's output after your death. If you do work, at some point you will be the recipient of an editor's inclinations. This is a part of being an artist, but a part I find most artists either ignore or haven't considered. In this article, I'll share what I've learned about the editing process, both as a photographer whose work has been edited and as an editor working with other peoples' photographs.

As many of you probably know, LensWork has had a special arrangement with the family of Wynn Bullock to produce special edition reproductions of a selection of photographs from both Wynn and his wife, Edna. What you probably don't know is that we are also working with the Bullock family to digitize all the Bullock images in their personal collections for the future needs of historians and researchers. This project has brought us into contact with hundreds of finished prints the Bullocks left behind, including a great many images unknown to the world. Wynn's career in photography is

especially significant, even though it followed his successful careers in music and business and didn't begin until mid-life. He began photographing in earnest at the age of 42. His experience with editors is a fascinating example of what can happen to a legacy in the hands of editors.

Wynn Bullock's work has been published in a number of monographs and photo collections. His images are some of the most widely-reproduced images of his era. However, it's fascinating that Bullock is best known for only about 15-20 specific images. This might imply that he was an artist with limited creative vision and limited creative output – when nothing could be further from the truth. Why does his legacy indicate otherwise? The story behind Bullock's legacy illustrates one of the pitfalls inherent in the editing process.

Bullock's first serious monograph was the self-titled book, *Wynn Bullock*, published by Scrimshaw Press in 1971. Scrimshaw Press was a wonderful, avant-garde publisher spearheaded by David Bohn and Fred Mitchell. Their unrelenting commitment to quality produced some of the best books of that time. Wynn Bullock's daughter, Barbara Bullock-Wilson, tells

the story of when she, her father and Dave Bohn gathered in Bullock's house to select the images for this first, important monograph. Wynn and Barbara had pre-selected about 150 photographs that they thought represented his best work. Included in this first group were the two images that Steichen had used in his *Family of Man* exhibition. The three of them subsequently winnowed those 150 down to less than 100 images and then cut the selection to the final 64 images that appear in the book. This process had started with the 150 images Bullock felt represented his best work and that number was reduced by 60% for no other reason than to fit the limited pages in the book!

The Scrimshaw Press book is a beautiful publication, but in its day it was quite expensive. Not long after it was published, another publisher – Morgan & Morgan – saw an opportunity to produce a book appropriate for consumers with a more modest budget. Partly because they wanted to choose an assortment of images for which Bullock was best known, they chose many of the same images for their book that had been included in Steichen's *Family of Man* and in the monograph. This pattern of repetition repeated itself in all the books published about Bullock and his photography, even though his creative legacy extends to many hundreds of wonderful images. Almost all of the books

have the same selection of images even though his body of work extends to some 600-800 finished fine art photographs. His color work remains essentially unpublished and his early, extended explorations with alternative processes and black and white light abstractions are almost unknown. Much of his work from the last years of his life is also unpublished and unrecognized. It's as though once images were selected for that first book in 1971, his career was typecast and his extended creative output simply ignored.

I can't blame the editors for this problem. It would be too easy to condemn them for somehow limiting the variety of his published work. Yet, it's not their fault – after all, the images they each chose in turn are great images and deserve to be published. It is, however, a reality of publishing that those funding a publication want to publish images that will sell the publication. Once a photographer is known for a given genre of work or for a dozen or two images, publishers naturally are inclined to repeat that success rather than to explore the artist's unknown or new creative avenues that have not yet proven marketable. Bullock's archives have dozens of images that could easily have been included in a selection of his best work. However, for reasons of personal taste, the vagaries of the market at the time, or the luck of the draw, these

images were buried in the archives, mostly unknown and rarely, if ever, published.

Bullock's case is not unusual. Almost without exception, contemporary photographers who become known for a given style of work find it almost impossible to break out of that mold. Jay Dusard is best known for his cowboy portraits, but his landscapes of the desert southwest are just as spectacular. Bruce Barnbaum is best known for his slit canyons but his urban abstracts are almost unknown. André Kertész is best known for his work in Paris in the 1930s but some of his most compelling images are from New York in the '60s and '70s. These are just a few examples that I know personally because I have published these photographers. My experience has taught me that almost every photographer of merit has interesting work in more than one genre but almost no visibility in any genre except the one for which they are best known.

In this way, the editor's role undeniably complicates the artist's life. Success begets success and combined with a certain herd mentality, this pushes publishers and exhibitors into conformity. As photographers, we can be tempted to fall in line with this seductive momentum and work against our broader creative inclinations. We may even complicate the issue by self-editing; we can begin to select images that

we suspect will succeed in the same way similar images have in the past.

In general, I can't see anything particularly wrong with that strategy. Why not focus on our successful images? After all, this is a natural response to both market forces and perhaps our own best aesthetic self. When producing prints for sale, there is no reason to resist this urge, but as *creative artists*, this can be a developmental dead end.

I suggest the best strategy is to find a blend of tactics – where we don't deny our successes, but at the same time don't allow ourselves to be caged by them either. By constantly and knowingly re-examining our own work with both the eyes of an editor and the eyes of an artist, we might be able to avoid the problems inherent in editing that can limit creativity and suppress exploration.

David Bayles, one of the authors of the wonderful book, *Art & Fear*, has suggested an exercise in editing that I have repeatedly found useful. He suggests sitting down with a large stack of your prints and after careful examination, dividing them into two distinct piles – those images that represent the work in your past with which you've been successful or comfortable, and a second pile representing unfamiliar or uncomfortable work. His experience

suggests that these two piles represent the work you are coming *from* and the work you were headed *toward*. Furthermore, he suggests that the work you are headed toward is the fertile ground for creative expression and artistic growth. Dividing our work in such a conscious way can help bring our creative life into purposeful focus.

It's interesting, however, that this exercise also tends to demonstrate the inherent problem when other people edit your work. Exhibitors, publishers, historians, and even your peers will understandably tend to define your photographic vision by what they've seen of your past work. The old maxim says, "Our friends define us by what we have done; we define ourselves by what we are capable of." The same can be said of editors.

I've noticed this in my conversations with photographers, too. I tend to have two conversations with photographers about their work: one conversation involves the photographer telling me all about what they've done, where they've been published, where they've been exhibited – a *curriculum vitae* of their creative life. Then there are those photographers who seem to be bored and disinterested with their previous work but who are on fire with enthusiasm and passion for the images they've just photographed – even

if they haven't yet developed the film. If the life of an artist is the life of *doing* (an active verb), then the artifacts left behind as the product of the creative life are no more than tracks left in the sand by the traveler now long gone. There appears to be two completely different objectives in the editing process: one is editing to demonstrate *history* and the other is editing to demonstrate *direction*. Publishers, galleries, and museum directors tend to edit for history; artists are better served by editing for direction.

As an artist, I've learned to value directional editing and the aid it is to my artistic growth. I've also learned to be amused by editing that tries to sort the artifacts of my past. Conversely, in my role as a publisher, I've learned to value the role of the editor in examining the artifacts and placing the work in the context of history, peers, trends, and movements. However, I've also learned that my ability to see the direction of an artist is not only nonexistent but also totally *non sequitur*. By keeping these two roles and functions clearly in mind, the maker of art is much more likely to be free of the opinions of those who edit their work rather than guided by or defined by them.



RARE AND UNKNOWN BULLOCK

From the Bullock Family Collection



by

Wynn Bullock

(1902 - 1975)



Worn Floor, 1952

QUOTES FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS

Photography suits the temper of this age – of active bodies and minds. It is a perfect medium for one whose mind is teeming with ideas, imagery, for a prolific worker who would be slowed down by painting or sculpting, for one who sees quickly and acts decisively, accurately.

Edward Weston

Art is not what you see, but what you make others see.

Edgar Degas

We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are.

Anais Nin

At times there seem to be a million ideas worth painting. However, there are days when it's a challenge to pull any idea together. On these days I go to my studio, leaf through an art history book, and tell myself that I am part of this great tradition.

James Dean

The artist is an educator of artists of the future... who are able to understand and in the process of understanding perform unexpected – the best – evolutions.

Saul Steinberg

It takes a lot of imagination to be a good photographer. You need less imagination

to be a painter because you can invent things. But in photography everything is so ordinary; it takes a lot of looking before you learn to see the extraordinary.

David Bailey

To look at a thing is very different from seeing it.

Oscar Wilde

To me, photography is the simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event.

Henri Cartier-Bresson

The best zoom lens is your legs.

Ernst Haas

I have gradually confused photography with life.

Jerry Uelsmann

Of the original phenomena, light is the most enthralling.

Leonardo da Vinci

One should really use the camera as though tomorrow you'd be stricken blind.

Dorothea Lange

Just because something doesn't do what you planned it to do doesn't mean it's useless.

Thomas A. Edison

IMPOSITIONS



by

Gregory Scott

Gregory Scott

Mariner



Arrangement in Gray and Black: Not the Artist's Mother

ON FAITH & FAME

by

Brooks Jensen

I am aging. I am either at the age at which the masters of photography produced their great works or am just past it. Almost without exception, the great photographers produced their best work in their mid- to late 40s, 50s and 60s. I am now 50 years old and this means I have a problem.

I have spent the last 30 years producing work in relative obscurity. Okay, let me be more honest. I am producing work in very-close-to-*absolute* obscurity. I hope someday to be only *relatively* obscure. According to my calculations, about 0.0002% of Americans have seen my photographs. I cannot bring myself to calculate this for the world's population. I understand fame and success perfectly well, but only as very distant, intellectual concepts.

Depressing as this might seem, I find that it places me comfortably side-by-side with an incredibly large group of my fellow photographic artists. Consider this: There are a billion or so people who own cameras and who take pictures on a regular basis. There are probably a few million who pursue it as a more serious artistic endeavor and of these, only a few hundred thousand likely pursue it with enough vigor, discipline, attention and regularity to truly be considered photographic *artists*. There are only a few dozen living photographers/artists currently listed by two or more galleries in the current directory of the Association of International Photographic Art Dealers. Any reasonable calculation indicates that I need to increase my visibility by a factor of a few million before I might be considered a Photographer-of-Importance.

Is it safe to gamble that an extremely high percentage of you reading this article face exactly the same statistical depression that plagues me? What are we to do?

SOLE E OMBRA

Sun and Shadow: Images of Italy



by

Mario DiGirolamo

Mario DiGirolamo



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