

## My Artwork

While living in Japan as a child, seven to nine years old, I had an awakening to esthetics. Seeing gardening, carpentry, swordsmithing and painting done with stunning mastery in a culture where my ways were foreign and not much admired was eye-opening. Compared to the reserve and austerity of Japanese culture the American mainstream of the late 1950s seemed garish. I learned about the beauty of simplicity. Then we moved back stateside. I was suddenly immersed in the Kennedy-Nixon election, the Bay of Pigs, the Cuban missile crisis, then the Berlin wall confrontation. The images I held of Japan receded to latency. America engrossed me. The lessons of Japan were not forgotten but waited in the background of my awareness. After a decade they were reawakened.

In 1969 I moved West to study photography. I had no real idea what I would learn; I had no idea how fortunate I was to attend Prescott College. I found there a method of visual understanding that was austere, almost severe, and strongly reminiscent of what I had seen in Japan. I had the good fortune to be trained by two masters: Jay Dusard and Frederick Sommer. I worked with both of my mentors, principally Jay, on a one-to-one basis almost daily for four years. With these two teachers the only acceptable standard was to approach perfection. I learned and followed rules of composition that most art students would chafe under and perhaps refuse but the result was I learned composition thoroughly. It was much like the training of Japanese carpenters, printmakers, or landscape painters. Mastery of basics led to mastery of the art.

Concise, integrative composition using an uncropped negative and full use of the tonal range and subtlety silver prints offer was the starting point. The next expectation was that my compositions, while formally complete and nearly perfect should also be unexpected; they should be surprising. I used an 8x10 view camera to expose black and white negatives in the studio and in the field. I worked in the darkroom for several hours almost every night. By 1973, the year I graduated, I had learned how to print.

I then attended California Institute of the Arts for a year where I felt totally out of place. I was told that everything I was working on was out of date; my work had no value because it was focused on how it looked instead of what it could be described as meaning. I was told that my work didn't say much; it didn't have a message. It was merely beautiful. I was young and unsure of myself and did not know what to make of being dismissed by people who obviously could not compose or print well and were not concerned that they couldn't. After this year of struggling I left Cal Arts. At that time I could not articulate that my work did indeed have a message. I believed it must but could not articulate what that message was. I did hold true to the advice of my original mentors: do not compromise what you know is true in the heart of your work.

First at Cal Arts and then many other times I have been told that art need not be beautiful; the time for that has passed. I was told that what mattered instead was what could be said about it and that art should be unsettling, angry and suggest nihilistic solutions. The first problem here is that this excuses incompetence in conception, composition and execution. Another problem with this approach is that if we nurse our thoughts in this direction we will be more unsettled, angrier and have more thoughts tinged with violence. This cannot be my way. My artwork is about recognizing the beauty that surrounds me, being grateful for it, and trying to share it. In the execution of my artwork I feel obligated to make the closest approach to perfection I can no matter how much time and effort is needed. So here is my work's message:

The scale does not matter, the subject does not matter. Whether I am looking at a mountain range from miles away or looking through a high power microscope there is always beauty to be seen. This world is filled with amazing lovely things visible from every point of view. I do my work because this beauty captivates me and I want to do something about it, I want to share it with others. Fascinated that beauty surrounds us all I have worked many years to see more fully and to stay mindful of this. The two great pleasures I have found here are that I do see the beautiful everywhere I go and I can bring this experience to others through my artwork and teaching. I could not say that one of these enriches my life more than the other. Both fulfill me.