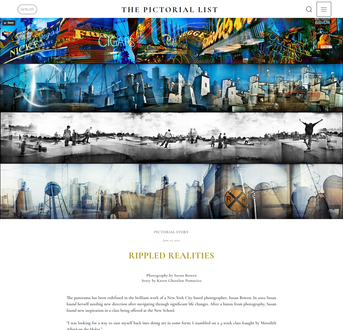


PICTORIAL STORY

June 15, 2015

RIPPLED REALITIES

Photography by Susan Brown
Story by Karen Glassbrook-Pomarico

The panorama has been redefined in the brilliant work of a New York City based photographer, Susan Brown. Its artist Susan found herself mulling over directions after navigating through significant life changes. After a hiatus from photography, Susan found new inspiration in a class being offered at the New School.

"I was looking for a way to ease myself back into doing art in some form. I stumbled on a work class fungsh by Meredith Allard on the Holga."

The Holga is a very lightweight plastic toy film camera, conceived and fabricated in Hong Kong China in 1982 and introduced to the Chinese public as an inexpensive medium format camera. It is a simplistic, so you are not looking through the lens. It has no controls, having a fixed f/8 setup, and 1 one shutter speed. The Holga is designed to use a 12", 120 medium format film allowing for large scale photographic prints. It has a lens close for flash photography, as well as a bulb mode for creating long exposures. These cameras were plagued with light leaks, became known for their out of focus, blurry, incorrectly exposed attributes that were more than frustrating to some, yet addicting for others, becoming a sought after cult camera.

Little did Susan know how this class would change her life, creating new direction and unforeseen inspiration.

"The lightness is a major benefit. Lens enjoy the qualitation of it, I tends to technology. Film a computer programmed so I enjoy the lens each moment of its. Using a very slow exposure time, it shows Daily, and spontaneously. How you catch the the technique I do with a normal camera."

Susan developed a unique process that embraces Low Fi Technology, and High Fi technology, combining the two to find equilibrium. She has an acquired wealth of knowledge accumulated over years of experience defining the world around her through the viewfinder and lens of a Holga. She is known for her overlapping multiple exposure panoramas, Susan has mastered a way of creating a rarified negative, a negative that has no dividing frames, making it one continuous image that is all encompassing.

This was achieved by first removing a rectangular piece of plastic on the inside of the Holga camera. This simple piece of plastic masks the film and creates individual frames, if left in Susan would not be able to create continuous 36" long film negatives. After relieving the chance and capturing the film, Susan would not advance the film all the way, creating double exposures by not completing the frames, exposing one continuous negative. Susan is often asked, how far to turn the dial, to advance the film. She has an exact answer, sometimes a little more, sometimes a little less, allowing the visuals and the memories to dictate the exact amount of the turn. Susan expects the magic that happens in these accidentous moments, letting them be the visual stories documented in continuous thought and consciousness.

"The long overlapping images are created by only partially advancing the film between exposures – the overlapping accurate to the film itself. I don't plan my images, they turn out however they turn out. I like the chance element and I like that there is a cinematic, narrative quality."

Susan found this multiple overlapping technique to work well on a myriad of landscapes, from rural Midwest farm lands, to industrial wasteland, as well as a multitude of urban landscapes. Susan finds linear and inspiration through being open to the experience. She can apply her knowledge and technique in many different environments and surroundings or ones where will help create that continuous image and monumental landscape. It is an intuitive process from beginning to end.

"Although I have lived in suburbs, small towns, and have used cameras, the city is where my heart lies. Wherever I photograph, I see things from the perspective of an urbanite. I find it interesting how, even in the country I walk out things underfoot and notice nuts. I think a city girl in a rural setting, and it's only a matter of time before she gets mesmerized by the nuts made terrain. I enjoy exploring the continuous and similarities between an urban life in New York City and my experiences of rural America.

The urban experience to me is largely about motion. The intense pace and vitality of the city excites me. I like to shoot fast and furiously, to be totally immersed and to be swept up in and along with the ride of the moment. Either I am shooting people that are in motion or I myself am in movement around my subject. I will stalk my subjects, be they a swarm of gesticulating business or always-in-a-hurry people and other lights. Subject motion wins I like unfocused objects, monumental things like great structures and Times Square billboards, and big crowds of people.

I guess it mostly expresses that I'm uncomfortable sitting still. But movement is what invigorates me. I chose to live in New York largely because there is so much going on, people moving fast, things happening fast. In choosing people, if they are not in motion they bore me, and in choosing stationary objects I have to pump around the thing like I'm trying to inflate those or something. I'm not wire-why. But that fast pace is inherent to how I shoot, I think it."

Her bazar, chance plays a major role, the serendipitous theme, is part of what excites her, she is always on the outlook for the element of surprise. The continuous negative of multiple exposures captures the authenticity of the experience in the moment for Susan, where the single frame does not express this to her in the same way.

Not only has Susan developed a method to express this of "long negatives, but through trial and error she has discovered innovative ways to print them. Susan soon realized she faced another hurdle, how to display these very large prints. Through her creative mind she developed a way to display these panoramic photographs, she hung them from the ceiling, allowing the viewer to walk around and ponnal Susan found the need to work with film, there was no digital camera that could do this technique. Moreover, with the advancement of digital developing software like Lightroom and Photoshop, allowed her to work in ways that were nearly impossible in the darkroom. Through the scanning of the negatives Susan could fully embrace the digital production of her continuous multiple exposures.

Susan spends many hours editing and making total adjustments to the scans of the negatives in Photoshop before printing. There is a lack of continuity where the images overlap and become a multiple exposure, forms of the scene would be dark, while others could be light, scenes that needed to be corrected not, it was a balancing act that Susan became very efficient at.

"I want my film using a large carry flatbed scanner (Epson 4990). I can scan a bulk of a roll at once and only need to do one splice. Because I want the option of printing large, I always scan at the maximum optical resolution (with this scanner only 6400 dpi). Though I wish I had a higher rez scanner, it sensitivity the film size so large even at that resolution. I like always scan at 3,9,9,9 more and are never less than 250MB on the finished file.

I work a long time on my images. The original exposure is very intuitive like to the unedited. I also spend a lot of time in Photoshop, doing a lot of cleaning, dust and scratches, and I do a lot of tonal adjustments. I like to make the image look like it looked when I was there, more aforementioned magic, usually illuminating the image so I get into to the large file more involved. I bend up the colors to increasing the contrast. I like pretty of color and can usually trying to mean that out of the file. I do edit the images. I remove distracting details like cigarette butts on the ground, and I sometimes move things around. Rarely do I combine images from multiple rolls. I do, however, sometimes remove chunks just to keep the piece a manageable width. I am usually taking away, not adding to the imagery, if changing it at all.

A roll of medium format film of maybe 24 or 36 overlapping exposures will at most give me two final images (I usually use 2 to 3 exposures, which is about half of the length of the roll). Occasionally I'm pressed on extra roll at one point, but that is very unusually prior. Most rolls will at most yield only one piece, from somewhere on the roll."

Susan's exhibition prints are digital C-prints. Her standard print size is 30"x 15"x, mounted and framed at 36"x 22x15. The negatives have a high resolution allowing Susan to print images as large as she is. It wasn't long before Susan recognized her desire to make things really big and started supplying for public art projects, where they financially support the execution of the art.

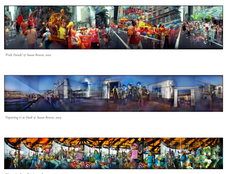
The Holga opened up a whole new world for Susan. A good reminder to all of us that you can change direction in life, and to not be afraid to learn new things. Susan went from creating an art at all, to allowing for a new direction to fully envelope her, enriching her life, and bringing much inspiration to ours. Susan believes coming back to her art latter in life has its advantages. She feels she benefits from her maturity. She approaches her work without the fear of failure, or being accepted, giving her the freedom to be genuine to her art.

"Doing any kind of photography allows one to engage with the world in a way you don't normally. Its be more intensely attuned and experience to what is going on around. The Holga does help me to be more spontaneous and put myself in places I would normally be too shy or go I'd say I interact with the world differently when carrying a Holga.

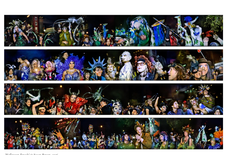
I like to think that my work has a lot of interest and complexity, and I intend for the images to celebrate the everyday details of life. I am also delighted how often these mostly unplanned juxtapositions capture my experience of a particular time and place and at the same time have an identity of their own."

good Morn' ing Susan Brown, 2012

Times Square North Other Stage ie Susan Brown, 2012

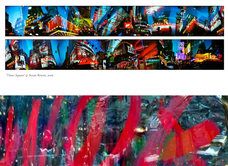


Graffiti ie Susan Brown, 2012



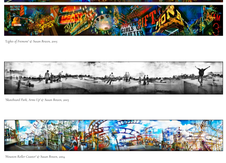
Bill Nye Sitter Left ie Susan Brown, 2012

Rollercoaster Left ie Susan Brown, 2012



Pride Parade ie Susan Brown, 2012

Dripping Ice Tunl ie Susan Brown, 2013



Merry-Go-Round ie Susan Brown, 2013

Wallenpaupack ie Susan Brown, 2013

Atlantic City ie Susan Brown, 2013

Times Square ie Susan Brown, 2014

Lights of Fremont ie Susan Brown, 2015

Moorland Park, Irvine, CA ie Susan Brown, 2015

Nimrod Kelly Center ie Susan Brown, 2014

'Prairie City Grain Elevator' © Susan Bowen, 2004

'Sea of Snakes' © Susan Bowen, 2004

'Field Silhouettes' © Susan Bowen, 2004

'John Deere Lot' © Susan Bowen, 2004

'War Memorial and DePew Fountain' © Susan Bowen, 2005

'Citizens Thermal Energy Plant' © Susan Bowen, 2005

'Power Plant and Train' © Susan Bowen, 2005

'H-N Feed Supply' © Susan Bowen, 2006

'Orange Trucks, DOT' © Susan Bowen, 2006

'Sauk Rapids Bridge from Below' © Susan Bowen, 2006

'Cement Plant, Snaking Pipes' © Susan Bowen, 2008

This was a period of growth for Susan, her fearless journey created new critical and creative thinking patterns that motivated and inspired a profound body of work. Most of all Susan allowed her art to help change her life. The Pictorial List is sincerely grateful to Susan for sharing her diligent exploration and insightful discoveries photographing with a toy camera, and taking it to its extremes to create exceptional art. Please follow her links, she has a resource of knowledge that is hard to come by. Follow and support her on social media to see what she is currently up to.

view Susan's portfolio

Website >>> *Instagram >>>*

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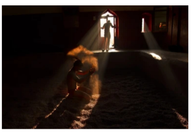

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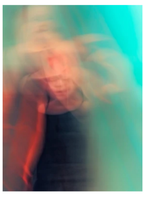

MULTIPLICITY Amy Newton McConnel invites us for an intimate view of her daughter's world, illuminating and capturing the expressive ambiance her daughter embodies with ADHD.

SHADES OF THE COALMAN of Pescaglia, immersed in the woo hills of the Tuscany region, the A Coalman is handed down. Simon

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Building a community of photography.

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