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2010.01.07: Artist Profile - Frank Grisdale

Frank Grisdale started printing with me about a year and a half ago and, as far as I know, has been printing with me almost exclusively ever since. As many in the Alberta art community know, Frank's primary focus is pictorial landscapes derived from photographic captures. His work places great emphasis on light, colour, and movement and the artist illustrates masterful understanding of these concepts as he applies them to his images. When I first saw some of the images he had passed along to me in digital form, even viewing them on the proofing grade NEC Spectraview displays in my studio I wasn't sure what to think . . . was this photography or was this something else? As a commercial photographer and digital print maker I spend a lot of time and energy perfecting my technique to get my images as close to deliverable as possible right out of camera. It was difficult for me to understand what Frank would put his images through to realize his final vision and, slowly, as printed more of his work and had more time to study the printed pieces I began to appreciate what Frank has managed to accomplish. As prints, his landscapes inspire a sense of peace and wholeness to the viewer that I have difficulty describing. They must be seen. Time spent looking at his work isn't a study of merely photographic technique; it is a glimpse into the artistic enlightenment that has allowed this man to create pieces that beckon another photographer to initiate introspection.

Over the past eighteen months I have printed Frank's work for his solo show at the Peter Robertson Gallery, possibly Edmonton, Alberta's most prestigious commercial gallery, an installation for the Canadian Consulate in Japan, an installation in a CIBC Wood Gundy office in Ontario, and for galleries throughout Canada and the US. In addition, I have seen his work published in publications by Tourism Alberta and have heard of his work being used for art therapy sessions throughout the province. Landscape art is far from being a cutting edge field nor could it even be remotely described as unsaturated. Therefore, what Frank has managed to accomplish, both at a personal level and from public and institutional acceptance of his work, is no small feat. In addition, he's been able to inspire photographers like myself to create work that they have never created before . . .

In April of 2009, Frank invited me to his home to photograph it. "It's not supposed to be a documentary project. I want these photos to be an artistic interpretation." I may not have gotten the quote quite right but the essence of what he said is there and this simple statement helped me create photographs which kicked off my journey into architectural photography. His historic home recently sold and I seized the opportunity to snap a few photos of the artist while dropping off a print shortly before he headed back to Ontario.

In June of this year, Frank will be directing a nine day photographic workshop tour in Rome and Tuscany with La Bella Vita Art Workshops. It's an opportunity that I would have jumped upon if it wasn't at the peak of the wedding (and wedding photography) season. \$2690 is easily what you would pay for a photographic workshop of this length with a maximum group size of just eight people with an internationally recognized photographer but in that price two nights stay in Rome, six nights in Tuscany, and most of your meals are also included.

This would probably be the last time that I get to chat with Frank and photograph him in this unique hot tub room. It was my favourite part of this house. Shot with the Leica M7 through the Zeiss Biogon 35/2 ZM on T-max 100 film which I thought was T-max that I was pushing to 1600. I made this realization AFTER I processed the film. Curiously, they were the two best exposed shots on the entire roll.

Frank playing with Boz (sp?), the more sociable of his and his wife's two cats. That weekend they would both leave with him from Edmonton.

One of my favourite images to print, "Cowboy Trail Looking West" reproduces beautifully on both the Arches 285gsm cold press fine art paper that I first started printing on for Frank as well as Hahnemuhle's Bamboo, a 90% bamboo, 10% cotton fibre paper that I consider the first major breakthrough in fine art inkjet receptive paper in the six years I have been printing professionally.

Another favourite, "Field and Fence" interacts with the texture of European cold press papers and really benefits from the bright white point provided by titanium dioxide whitening of Intelicoat's preparation of Arches 285gsm cold press. The colours found on scraps of flawed and undelivered prints of this image have compelled other photographers to choose this paper for their own work.

"Goldfish in Bamboo Stream" came with a generous stack of Japanese gampi torinoko paper. This paper handmade in Japan by ancient Japanese men through a very traditional process and is only available in 20x30" sheets. The paper, while internally sized, still required a little more drying time than was naturally provided by the Epson Stylus Pro 9800

even at 2880x1440 DPI and with the highest microweave settings enabled. To produce acceptable results, I specified additional drying time using Ergosoft's Posterprint and also burned through most of Frank's initial stock of his paper before creating a usable print environment and ICC profile. Even then, the unbleached nature of the paper reduced gamut in the blues and greens but the prints, at least to my eye, possessed qualities that I have yet to recreate with other papers due to its natural internal lustre. Fortunately, I never tired of printing this image.

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