

Tuesday, July 28. 2009

2009.07.11: Leanna North of Bon Accord

Jason Hafso had an iPhone pic of an abandoned house north Bon Accord he cleverly captioned "Wanna buy a house? LOL" When I saw the photo I immediately asked him for details of its location and after doing his headshot he quickly mapped out approximately where this site was and some nearby landmarks. As usual, I scouted the location with Leanna and I kept some lighting and camera equipment in the car in case it was a suitable shoot location. I shot three new rolls of business cards and several large format frames. Below are a couple favourites.

I scouted out the basement while Leanna changed in the car. There was a window that opened up to waist high grass outside that I immediately wanted to work with so I set up a Calumet Illuma Medium/Plume Wafer 100 softbox with 40degree Lighttools Soft Egg Crate to minimize spillage off the 7foot ceiling. Shot with the Sinar X and the Calumet Caltar-S II 300/5.6 at F/8, 1/125s on Fujichrome Velvia 100F. The lens yielded extremely shallow depth of field which I couldn't achieve on small format on which I shot some of the new business cards.

This is the third of the three buildings on this abandoned homestead. The building the fence in front of it is elegantly decayed and this area backs onto a rolling canola field and it's all framed by poplar forests. I wanted to take in as much of the location as possible without it distracting from the real subject. Shooting 4x5 I was able to use the ultra wide 75/4.5 Calumet Caltar-N/Rodenstock Grandagon lens at F/4.5 and 1/125s and without any tilt or swing maintain very shallow depth of field without anything more than perspective distortion.

As always, thank you to Leanna for being so available to test new equipment and locations.

Posted by Klyment Tan in Shoots at 02:53

Friday, July 17. 2009

2009.06.26: Peter and Shaun

My studio is located in the characteristic northern end of the Edmonton Gallery Walk. Between my studio and my apartment is an expansive parking lot. When I'm crossing this parking lot to go to my studio in the morning or when I'm returning late at night I often encounter some of the working poor of our city as they sort through the bins for anything of value. Most just look for recyclable containers with deposits. Some look for resalable goods. I came across Peter, Shaun, and a third companion, Colleen who refused to be photographed. Peter and Shaun have known each other for a few years and Peter's been living on the street for the past seven years. He was a construction worker, mostly doing cement work. However, he lost his job when arthritis rendered him unable to do his job. His employer told him to apply for government disability insurance but in his mind he equated this to welfare and he would prefer to live on the street than to collect a hand out from our government. I chatted with Peter and Shaun for about a half hour while preparing for an engagement shoot. Despite their humble living arrangements they seemed content with their station in life. Most of the police in the area seem to know Peter and don't hassle him when they find him. Strangely, Shaun and Peter may be more content with what they are doing than I am with what I do at times and between parking, speeding, business regulation, and tax filing concerns, they likely have fewer run ins with government officials than I do. Shaun (left) and Peter. I hope that I'm spelling Shaun's name correctly. I doubt that they were Cash Store customers but that didn't seem to bother anyone. This was one of the photos that I took with the Sinar X and the Schneider Symmar-S 210/5.6 after selling the Horseman LE and Calumet Caltar-S II 210/5.6. Velvia 100F, scanned on the Microtek M1 on the glass holder so that I could scan the film edges.

Peter's wrist.

Posted by Klyment Tan in Personal at 19:58

Wednesday, July 8, 2009

2009.07.08: Some thoughts

Dong and I shot a wedding over the weekend. The act of shooting a wedding isn't particularly out of the ordinary for us but the nature of this wedding was. I may have more details posted about this wedding later but as a result of this wedding I now have three new rolls of HP5+ shot at ISO 3200 that I am afraid to process. I am not afraid that they are out of focus or improperly exposed; I just don't feel ready to look at these photos. We shoot numerous weddings a year even though we don't advertise ourselves as wedding photographers and while all weddings are special and, speaking for myself, I still feel that I develop some sort of emotional connection with our couples and their friends and family. However, through this wedding I experienced something else. I think that I saw love and emotion that I have never seen before.

Dylan and Whitney just left with the Epson 9800. The printer served me almost flawlessly for almost two years and when I saw it for what could be the last time in Dylan's van, I wasn't expecting it but I did feel a bit sad to see the printer go. I know that it'll be cared for as well as Dylan and Whitney know how to and I hope that it will serve them as well as it has served me. I am looking forward to seeing some breathtaking prints that they may be making with this little printer.

Over the past few months I have shot a fair bit of large format film on a variety of cameras. Over the past several months I have also shot an innumerable number of rolls of 35mm film through the Zeiss Ikon and Leanna's father's Nikon F-301. During these past few months I have created some of my favourite images of my career as a photographer and I wanted to share the experience with as many other photographers as I can. However, I am finding that after having gotten used to the reassuring instant-confirmation capabilities and conveniences of digital capture, many photographers shy away from an opportunity to shoot film even though they know that it could have a profound impact on their work and, in the case of working pros, for their businesses. I am starting to think that my purpose is not merely to educate and to share but to help dispell other photographers' fear of certain pieces of equipment and workflow. One day I will be shooting formats even larger than 4x5 and one day I would like to try to make my own wet plate photographs but because that I have successfully shot 4x5 film as part of some of my commercial workflows in a world that expects digital capture and because I am not afraid to purchase and carry whatever equipment it takes to achieve a certain look, I feel that I can now say that I now live without fear of any medium or any piece of equipment related to photographic imaging.

Posted by Klyment Tan in Personal at 16:11

2009.06.12: Residential architecture - 9134 Valleyview Drive

Lesa Patermann, a realtor I photographed last year, passed my name along to her colleague Jason Hafso. Jason had an interesting home he was entrusted to sell - it was a home built in the '50's and then redeveloped by Katherine Ball as her family's primary residence. Jason was in a hurry to get these photos shot because he was hoping to have his listing go live within a few days. My preferred medium for shooting interiors is 4x5 film and turn around for colour film is about a week to ten days so I brought along the Nikon D3 and shot some temporary photos that Jason could use in the listing before the film was scanned. We did a walk through the evening before to get a feel for the light in each room and to develop a schedule for the best times to shoot each room. Most rooms would be shot best with direct sunlight entering the windows, some were best shot around dusk, and some were not affected by outdoor ambient light and these could be shot after sun down or whenever there was a free moment between shots with more finicky lighting.

From the moment I realized how serious he was about getting good architectural photos done for this listing I had high expectations for both the property and for this realtor. Jason didn't disappoint me. Jason is one of the most motivated and hardworking realtors that I have met and in spite of the realization that multimillion dollar homes like these are much more involved listings than homes appealing to first time home buyers and the fact that listings like these scare most realtors (perhaps including Jason), I was pleased to see that he was going to do his absolute best to make sure that this listing was done right and would really stand out amongst a surprisingly large number of multi-million dollar homes listed in Edmonton.

All photos shot with the Horseman LE and the Calumet Caltar-N II/Rodenstock APO Grandagon 75/4.5 in a Copal #0 on Fuji Pro-S 160, metered to ISO 100, and scanned with the Microtek Artixscan M1. Jason, and the designer her family were instrumental in creating these photos. Thank you.

This kitchen is among the most beautiful kitchens I have seen in this city. Thin granite countertops (I think),

uniquely-shaped centre bay sink, and what I believe is a custom face for the refrigerator to allow it to better match the rest of the kitchen's colour scheme. Shot around 5pm, all existing light and with lights in the hallway turned on.

The living room. It's a great meeting space but I experienced a lot of difficulty getting my shot in this room because of deep the room was thus creating a lot of natural light fall off from the window to the end of the room furthest from the window. I wanted to retain natural light from the outside but I still wanted the viewer to have a feel of what the interior lighting was like. I ended up using the Bowens Explorer and two heads with dish reflectors to pump light into the wall furthest from the window that's right beside the camera. If I recall correctly, the wall/fireplace area was built out of tinselstone or a similar stone that had a warm tone to it that would help the daylight balanced flash match the daylight-washed tungsten interior light of the room.

We struggled with a large and stubborn cloud that wouldn't go away for almost an hour before capturing this shot. During this part of the day I wish I had two cameras - one that I could set up in preparation for this shot and another that I could continue shooting the rest of the home with. I used some tilt movement to shallow the depth of field. I wanted to showcase the faucet and the edge of the bath tub while giving the viewer a sense of the light that enters the master bedroom bathroom around this time. The blinds are closed slightly and I believe that most of what you see of the outside is actually a reflection off the top surfaces of the blinds. This bathroom is easily the most beautiful bathroom I have ever seen.

The rest of the master bedroom ensuite bathroom.

The master bedroom. A lot of the home's furniture and accents are inspired by South American designs from the designer's term in South America. Just left of this frame is a cozy nook in the wall.

The balcony off the hallway leading to the master bedroom. Balconies are often awkward areas to shoot and this was no exception. Large evergreens peeked into the frame and the balcony wasn't as deep as I'd like it to be for setting up my camera and the patio door opening to the balcony didn't open the way I needed it to be ideal for setting up the camera but it worked out in the end. Rather than a "this house has a balcony" type photo, I wanted the viewer to feel as though they were lounging on the balcony on a lazy summer afternoon.

I'm still not as good at shooting exteriors as I would like to but this back yard night scene is one of my favourites from the shoot. The exposure time at F/16 and ISO 100 was approximately one minute. I wanted just a bit of light in the sky and I wanted the viewer to imagine how cool it would be to host a social gathering in this court yard. We lit some tea lights for the lanterns and turned on the little lights in the trees. Then we waited.

More photos after the jump.Katherine's office. Jason and I both loved the drafting table and felt that even though this was an office in the basement, it was characteristic and important to this home.

Rear exterior shot.

The stairs leading from the basement to the main floor. I used a combination of the Cokin graduated tobacco and graduated neutral density filter going from dark at the top to lighter at the bottom to help counter the brighter, cooler light at the top of the frame as it transitioned into the warmer, dimmer tungsten halogen light from the basement.

Posted by Klyment Tan in Shoots at 14:58

Thursday, July 2, 2009

2009.06.23: Epson Stylus Pro 9900 Arrives

About two years after Printhead.com upgraded from using the Epson 9600 to the 9800 as its primary large format photo and fine art inkjet printer the primary printer is being replaced again. The move from the 9600 to the 9800 offered smoother ink droplet patterns with and without RIPs, slightly better paper handling, lower chance of nozzle clog (in my experience, anyway), slightly more cost effective (but still wasteful) black ink switching when switching from matte or glossy substrates, better dMAX and wider gamut with OEM inks (while making it harder to use third party inks and bulk ink systems), pressurized ink cartridges so that they don't stick out of the printer, about double the print speed, and a bunch of other nice little adjustments. The move from the Epson 9800 to the 9900 is beyond what Epson marketing calls "evolutionary"; it's nothing short of revolutionary in the hands of someone who works with this printer good ten hours a week with over sixty hours a week of print time. Epson's website has a list of new features if you want to see all of them. My favourites are that black ink switching now only wastes black ink as opposed to all or many of the other colours needlessly as well, further increased print speed (load is about the same, cut time is significantly faster and actual print times are dropped 50-60%), noticeably improved colour gamut with substrates requiring glossy black ink, refined paper basket design, and the new spindleless roll loading system that doesn't require a third arm or a leg to help you load paper onto the spindle and doesn't require separate adapter end plugs to adapt to 3" roll core sizes.

Around this time, two other photographers have become new 44" inkjet printer owners. Randy Stinchcombe of Eye Captured Images was indecisive about picking up my 9800 and I subsequently sold it to Dylan McAmmond of En Vogue Photography in Saskatoon. Randy talked himself into purchasing a new Epson 9900 as well. Congratulations to both of you. Dylan and Whitney will be in Edmonton from July 5 to 8th for hands-on training at my studio. On the 7th, Dylan has enlisted the help of Nick Hawkeye, who could be the youngest large format print operator in the world another large format printer who [semi]successfully moved his Epson 9880 down to his basement by himself when he was fifteen, riding it as a sled down the stairs and with just one other person managed to move my very first large format printer from my studio down the stairs with a bit more success. Dylan has also enlisted the help of Sean Traynor, an all around cool guy and in return Dylan has promised to buy him beer after the successful move of the printer out of the studio. Little does Sean know that Dylan isn't old enough to buy beer. Maybe he'll find out now.

Posted by Klyment Tan in Equipment at 13:39

2009.06.08: Julie's film test

Julie is my favourite blonde model. I have worked with her extensively in commercial shoots for Derk's and Bridal Fantasy but rarely do we get together to do personal projects. I feel that Nikolas kind of pushed us to do this one in a tighter time frame than I had hoped but I am still glad that we shot. He's using Julie as one of his models for his Contessa entries and I intend to shoot the photographs on 4x5 film. To reduce the uncertainty, I intend to test as many of his models as I can with as many different film types as I can to get a better feel for which films work best for which models. I tested Portra 160VC, Provia 100F, Astia 100F, Velvia 100F, and Pro-S 160. Unfortunately, those were the large film stocks that I had in the fridge and there is absolutely no colour sheet film in stock anywhere at any of the Edmonton camera stores. I shot all of the film frames this day and Nikolas handled the D3 and the 70-200/2.8 VR. I feel that his shots overall were more successful than mine. I'm kicking myself for not putting more into this shoot, subconsciously treating it as just a film test when instead I should have been savouring this opportunity to work closely with an accomplished international model and an accomplished international makeup artist/hair stylist/fashion stylist. I'll make it up to you guys. I promise.

Julie represented by Sabrina Notte. Photos shot in a privately owned and maintained natural reserve scouted by Cody Tait and Mike Isaak. Thank you. Favourites posted up front. Additional images after the jump.

One of Nikolas' shots. I asked Julie to find a semi-comfortable spot to lie down on. Working with the longer lens for the lower shots had its benefits. Furthermore, being able to get lower with a small format or medium format camera as opposed to shooting with a 4x5 monorail on uneven ground also had its benefits.

I was preparing the Horseman LE while Nikolas spotted an opportune moment and started working with Julie by some trees. The sun had lowered to just the right level.

I wasn't sure how to direct our for this shot so she just did her own thing. Hahah . . . I think I was pretty lost for most of

the day working over technical details in my head. Still, one of my favourite shots of Julie. After scanning the Pro-S frame I contacted the new owner of the Horseman LE and the Calumet Caltar-S II 210/5.6 that with respect to exotic bokeh and flare he may have just hit the jackpot.

I had a number of images shot with Leanna's Hasselblad 501CM and 80/2.8 Zeiss Planar because I felt it was important to test Fujifilm Provia 100F but didn't have enough 4x5 sheet film to test it effectively. I picked up a few 120 format rolls from McBain Camera while Nikolas was doing Julie's hair and makeup back at the studio. I think that this film shoots a lot better when backlit and without direct sun working as key light. Perhaps it has something to do with my lack of UV filtration.

I like this shot of Julie but as noted before, I don't think that Provia 100F shoots as well when direct sun is hitting skintones. Another of my favourites from Nikolas' set.

One of the last shots of the day. Shot on a sheet of Fuji Astia 100F. The colours reproduce what I saw faithfully. Too bad that the sun had moved down so far by this time that I was struggling to get enough light. I also don't feel that I worked my swing movement to where I wanted it to be.

My version of Nikolas' lying down shot. I think I ended up shooting from too low. Where Nikolas got some light to illuminate Julie's eyes I struggled to get the light that I wanted. For low angle shots like these in the future I am definitely bringing light so that I can get the foreground blur that I wanted to incorporate into the shot but still maintain the life and intensity that Julie infuses into every shot.

And finally, a severely underexposed Astia 100F version of that other shot made on Pro-S. I think both frames are a bit underexposed due to my failure to zero some displacement movements, some tilt, and just metering a bit carelessly. I'm sorry, everyone.

Posted by Klyment Tan in Shoots at 04:17

2009.04.16 Whitney Grace's Headshot

Rina Chan and Anthony Chan of Infused Studios referred Whitney to me. This Red Deer-based actress couldn't find a suitable photographer in her municipality. Her agent suggested a photographer in Calgary and she also considered flying out to Vancouver to get her shots done there. It was my first headshot session of the year and I feel that we saved her a longer trip out and judging from where she's used the photos already I think she was satisfied with the results. Hair, makeup, and styling by Nikolas. Here's a small sampling of what we felt worked. Nikon D3 and 135/2 Defocus Control Nikkor used except where noted.

In spite of other headshot photographers calling a full bleed headshot "tacky", I prefer to create some space naturally in the photograph for the actor's name if he or she decides to put it in as opposed to the recent trend for photographers to make the actual photograph a relatively small proportion of an 8x10 print or to add black or "sloppy" (their words, not mine) edges digitally for the photographs.

We found a spot with good backlight and a time where the sun would enter into the 135/2 DC Nikkor at just the right angle to give me the contrast that I wanted with minimal adjustment. Here I'm holding a 42" circular reflector in my left hand in front and slightly above the model's head and shooting with the D3 in my right at close range. Aperture set at F/2.

We had a number of smiling shots which we felt were important for Whitney because she her smile is so natural and her teeth are absolutely flawless and perfectly aligned. Smiling shots for actors were never my favourite so I'm compromising by posting this photo.

I shot a roll of Fujipress/Superia 800 through the Zeiss Ikon. I wanted to see what kind of funky flare I would get the 90/2.8 Elmarit. I realize that this wouldn't be a headshot candidate but I knew that we already had the shot on the other camera.

Posted by Klyment Tan in Shoots at 03:59

2007.06.20: Getting reacquainted with large format film

I doubt that the date in this entry's title is correct but it's my guess as to when these photos were taken. It would be years before the film would see a lab, strangely, I couldn't have been more pleased what the heat and radiation damage has added to these photos. It was unexpected. Had I predicted that there would be so much loss in sensitivity I would have requested that the film be push processed two stops. Fuji NPS 160 metered at ISO 100 and shot on Gordon Henderson's Linhof Technika V (I think) 4x5 and I believe a Voigtlander APO-Lanthar 210/4.5 with some tilt and swing movement. Leanna, as usual, is my test subject for new film and cameras. It brought a smile to my face to see these

photos again having totally forgotten about them.

Shot in the road next to my apartment which, coincidentally, is just across the alley from my studio.

A slightly tighter crop. Some vertical displacement used to prevent perspective distortion and some tilt movement used.

Posted by Klyment Tan in Shoots at 03:45

2009.04.30: Peter Hemingway's former home

Recently, I have taken an interest in architectural photography. It was opportune that one of my printing clients owned a house once built as a notable architect's primary residence and was in the process of moving. Frank Grisdale, a longtime printing client soon turned into a photography client when he booked me to photograph his home, designed by and once owned by Peter Hemingway, without the mandate to document but to interpret artistically. It was an interesting assignment. The architect is responsible for the design of Edmonton landmarks such as the Muttart Conservatory, Coronation Pool, and the Stanley Engineering Building and this one of a kind building presented many challenges and opportunities to create images that were out of the ordinary.

All photos shot with the Horseman LE and the Calumet Caltar-N/Rodenstock Grandagon-N 75/4.5 on Kodak Portra 160VC film, processed by ABC Photocolour in Vancouver, and scanned back in my studio on a Microtek Artixscan M1.

I'm starting with one of the photos from the shoot more typical of architectural photography. I chose to shoot at F/22 to keep everything in focus. I also kept the planes parallel and used some vertical displacements to prevent parallel lines in the frame from converging. I used a Lee polyester 80C filter to correct the colour temperature more towards daylight for the daylight balanced film but didn't do a full correction to maintain some of the warmth of the room lighting. The fireplace is running outside of the frame camera left to give the surface of the fridge a bit of light. A halogen table lamp was placed in the stairs leading to the basement and the lights in the dining room were turned on but dimmed slightly.

Unlike most homes that I have come across, this home has extensive hallways and is very linear; it has above average square footage though it's not gigantic yet the house measures about 200 feet from end to end. This is the hallway leading from the master bedroom to the hot tub room.

The hot tub room. It's dry in this photo because Frank is usually the only one who uses it and he only uses it in winter. Too bad because it could have scored him so many scantily clad hot females. Anyhow, I wanted to get the rail and part of the tree in focus while reducing focus to the rest of the frame. It was an interesting experiment that I feel yielded an aesthetically pleasing image though I have had mixed reviews from other photographers about my choice in the use of significantly amounts of tilt.

A portal from the dining room to the solarium that Frank and his wife use as their offices. I employed some tilt and swing to obscure some of the details in the other room.

You'll see in a later entry that I love shooting bathrooms. This particular bathroom, while simple, was thoughtfully designed to efficiently distribute space and integrate any features. The bathtub is slightly depressed to reduce step up, there is a carefully placed window, and a reading nook by the toilet in which reading materials may be stored. Frank and his wife commissioned this bathroom to be fully renovated and part of the renovations included some hand-picked slate tiles. I used a the bottom end of a Cokin graduated tobacco filter from the Z-pro 4" filter system to help balance some of the window light with the incandescent indoor light and also to help reduce the intensity of the window light to retain a bit of detail from the outside.

Posted by Klyment Tan in Shoots at 03:07