

Monday, January 18. 2010

2010.01.18: [De]thinking Lighting

Patrick Jacob of Inex Design Studio came to me with a table that needed photographing. The table has spent the past two weeks sitting around my studio as I agonized over how to light it. The more I thought about it, the worse the lighting got. Over the past few hours I started working with my really old, really basic, and extremely cheap used Norman lighting system. I finally got the results that I wanted. I'll blog again once the film is back from the lab and I am thinking of shooting some Ilford HP5+ and pushing it to ISO3200 in HC-110 dilution B for a few of the angles to see what happens. 4x5 Portra 160VC rated at ISO 100 used as the primary film type with some Fuji Provia 100F to be pushed to ISO 400 out of curiosity.

Lit with a Norman P500D power pack driving two LH4 heads. One set at 250Ws (channels A and B at 125Ws each combined to power one outlet) and one set at 62Ws (channel C only). The basic 5" Norman grid reflector with grid use to backlight the top glass. 18" beauty dish with a diffusion sock attached for foreground lighting. The "real" shots are being shot on a Horseman LE 4x5 monorail through the Schneider Symmar-S 210/5.6. The rail is tilted forward and the standards were leveled out to provide enough vertical displacement movement to properly proportion the table while still shooting from above the table to show more of the glass work on top. The camera is supported by a Gitzo GT1540 tripod and a Markins Q3 ball head. The head is under 1lbs including clamp (385g) and is rated for a 65lbs (30kg) capacity. And this is Markins' smallest ball head. It's lower profile than most pro ball heads thus helping to reduce impact on tripod stability due to addition of height and is rated for higher capacity and is lighter than any other ball head sold by Vistek or McBain Camera . . . and it's likely cheaper than any other ball head I have found. Markins' North American distributor is based in Langley, British Columbia.

Posted by Klyment Tan in Lighting at 01:28

Tuesday, January 12. 2010

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.

Posted by Klyment Tan in Artist Profiles at 02:11

Saturday, January 9, 2010

2010.01.05: [Almost] Last roll of T-max . . . ever!

I hate Kodak T-max. Even the new stuff. It has nothing to do with the imaging characteristics of the film . . . just that the film holds a bad curl and seems to attract dust and get scratched much more easily than Ilford's films. There is one more roll of T-max 400 film that I need to process and I am giving away the rest of my Kodak black and white film. Anyhow, a few frames from the roll. Just fun shots to test my chrome/vulcanite body/MP finder Leica M7. The chrome colour is very important! And for the record, I didn't want to buy this camera but my Zeiss Ikon is in Japan for repair and has been gone for a month or two now. I couldn't wait any longer to get a manual focus rangefinder back and I couldn't find a good deal on a silver Zeiss Ikon so I picked up the first good deal I found (or maybe Ethan found) for a Leica M7. That said, a good deal on an M7 is about twice as expensive as a Zeiss Ikon and brand new M7's are around triple the prices of brand new Zeiss Ikons. I kind of get it but not really.

And right after typing all of that above I realize that I am posting photos from a roll of Ilford HP5+ pushed to ISO 1600 in Kodak XTOL stock solution. Hahah . . . I was looking for dust and scratches and couldn't find them. But my assertions about T-max still stand. Anyhow, lots more stuff to post over the next few days. Check back after the weekend!

Leanna and her Vancouver Winter Olympics mitts. You'll just have to take my word that they are red. The disfigured humanoid form in the background is Ethan. Shot with a black Leica Elmarit 28/2.8 ASPH. I probably would have kept this lens if it was silver and if it had a full focusing ring instead of that silly thumb focuser that Leica keeps putting on their more recent lenses. I think this is my last shot of Ethan . . .

. . . unless I shot this or this. Sébastien Guillier-Sahuque stretching some of his own canvas prints. Recently he printed a set of 3:1 aspect panoramic images that got a lot of attention of several people who came through my studio as they were hanging on the wall to dry.

Sébastien looking through Ethan's Ikon and 90/2 Leica Pre-APO Summicron attached.

I haven't had a chance to process the film from the Technikardan yet. I was trying to shoot some abstract shots of snowdrifts.

Guess who are the people in this shot while I try to guess who shot this without first focusing the camera.

Leanna making a craaaazy person face just before supper at Il Pasticcio.

Posted by Klyment Tan in Personal at 00:58

Friday, January 8, 2010

2009.10.30: Art Gallery of Alberta for Avenue Magazine

In October and December of 2009 I had the privilege of photographing the interior of the new Art Gallery of Alberta for Avenue's sneak peek into the interior to be run in their January issue. Art direction by Paige Weir of Avenue Magazine with direction from the AGA by Sarah Hoyles. Ethan Oblak assisted with the October shoot and Rob Lim assisted with the December visit. Shots were made on the Horseman LE 4x5 chassis on Kodak EPP and Fuji Provia 100F or the Linhof Technikardan 45s on Kodak Portra 160VC. There are eight images that I'd like to discuss but my words are governed by a non-disclosure agreement and since the AGA isn't officially open yet I'll only discuss three of the eleven that were published from this day of shooting. I will try to blog again about these photos once the gallery is open. Another huge thanks goes out to Curtis Comeau for referring me to Avenue so that I would have the opportunity to shoot this project.

Shot in October. Still a lot of construction going on in what I believe is the main foyer. This was the Fuji 9x12cm instant proof.

A scaled down scan of the frame delivered to Avenue. I wanted an out of focus foreground element and using an ultrawide lens like the All shot through the Calumet Caltar-II N/Rodenstock Sironar-N 75mm F/4.5 allowed me to exaggerate the size of the foreground glass panels. F/11, Fuji Provia 100F.

Shot with the Horseman LE and the 135/5.6 Caltar-II S/Rodenstock APO Sironar-S. There wasn't enough room to back up further to use the 210/5.6 Symmar-S so I used the 135 and applied a bit of front tilt to shallow the depth of field. I also wanted to keep the parallel lines parallel so I needed to apply rear rise to capture more of the lower part of the frame. However, the camera had to stay at a certain height so that there could be some more of the space visible and the image circle of the lens, while fairly large, has its limits. In the dim light I wasn't able to stop down. The dark areas in the bottom are outside the circle of illumination of the lens. In a way, this was an error on my part. There was another frame with less vignetting but I found this was the most interesting frame. 1/2s exposure, F/5.6, Kodak Ektachrome EPP.

Fuji instant film proof the next shot. Ethan is keeping the film flat for me.

Shot with the Linhof Technikardan 45s on Kodak Portra 160VC with the Caltar-II N 75mm F/4.5, this shot provided an interesting challenge for the film. Had this been shot on slide film we would have lost all shadow detail or the film would have to be overexposed so all highlight detail on the white surfaces and metal would be lost. According to the software densitometer in Silverfast while scanning with the Microtek M1, no areas were blown out. And these are the two photos I have posted from this camera. I purchased the Technikardan a few months ago from legendary photographer Juliana Sohn. She has since moved on to shoot a Leaf digital medium format back on an Alpa Max.

Posted by Klyment Tan in Shoots at 23:17