



## The Down and Dirty of It

*As your desire is, so is your will.  
As your will is, so is your deed.  
As your deed is, so is your destiny.*

– The Brihadaranyaka

I believe that when we create personal images, for them to be successful, they come from the sum of our personal experience. If we all had the same experiences, we would all make the

same pictures.

Some of us find rocks and trees beautiful; others are interested in faces and expressions, others in the assimilation of circumstances into a decisive moment. Whatever your photographic interests, to make successful images that give you great personal satisfaction, you must become a translator of your experiences, into images. Using

Visual Journaling will help you become a personal translator, sharing your experiences through the process of image-making.

I hope what is contained within gives you the same satisfaction with your work as it has given me.

– Richard Newman

## A Creative Approach to Growing Your Vision – The Visual Journal

We know the zone system, we know how to adjust our view cameras for proper perspective, but does the sum of our photographic knowledge give us a creative burst? About five years ago, I began a process of photographic journaling that has changed and improved my photography. If you are a musician, you play scales or practice; as image-makers it becomes more important, as technology advances, that we understand what the internal drivers are that influence the images that we make. Use the visual journal as a painter would a sketchbook. It's a repository of visual ideas.

To start off, make a commitment to yourself that you will follow through on this exercise. It is very difficult to grow flowers without the waiting, the watering, the nurturing, and the weeding. The end result is the harvest. Remember that it is not the destination but the journey. Just like a garden, our photography grows when we pay atten-



National Finals Rodeo, Las Vegas NV

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tion to it. In the following, I hope to convey my method for growing your personal photography and hope that it brings you the same inner success as it has brought to me.

### Planting the Seed

The first rule is simple, use your camera! Make the commitment to shoot at least 1 roll of film a week and make a print from that roll. Don't take out 3 camera

*I photograph to see what things look like photographed.*

– Garry Winogrand

bodies and 10 lenses, TAKE ONE CAMERA AND ONE LENS! Don't let yourself be confused will all the possibilities of what the technology affords us as image-makers. Get as simple as you can with your equipment. This is important! What using one camera and one lens will teach you is how to **make photographs** instead of **taking photographs**. Another reason for

this simplicity thing is so that you are not fumbling in your camera bag looking for the right piece of equipment; you have your camera ready and you can become much more involved with the moment. Figure out how it works best for you. It can be 35mm color negative, Polaroid, whatever medium you chose to record your week, stick with it. Make one print from that roll/box/digital storage and start to carry it around with you just as you would a journal; it is after all, your visual journal. Don't put any pressure on yourself about subject matter, just get out at least once a



Big Bend Campground

© Richard Newman

week and use your camera. I found this to be the hardest part of the process in getting started. I had to look for something to photograph. Just like the seed when it is in the ground, this is the part where things are happening, but you just can't see it yet. Don't worry, things are occurring down there in your soul, they just aren't ready for the outside

world yet. At the beginning, if you need to make more than one print from that roll, go ahead and do so but remember we are gonna weed these out. Just keep the images that affect you. Don't show your journal around just yet, make it a personal thing for right now. Over the course of the next six months or so, you will build a body of work, it may seem disjointed but don't worry about it, just take the pictures.

Also find the easy way for you to carry it around. I make black and white prints that are no larger than 8x10 inches so that it can fit into my briefcase. I also have a small 4x6-inch book that I put my Polaroids® in. Don't make the mistake that I did, write the date you made the image on the back, you'll appreciate doing that later.

### Watering and Nurturing

The next five months or so are critical to this journalizing process. You have to stick with this and keep using your camera. I can't say this enough! What begins to happen after about 6 months is you begin to see continuity in what

you are photographing. Keep the date on the back of the photographs, but now begin to arrange them in subject matter groups or however the images make sense to you. Don't start to weed out the stinkers yet, just get a group of images together. In six months, you'll begin to see what you photograph when you just go out as a visual image-maker. I found this extremely interesting. I continue to photograph what I consider to be my art photographs, but I found that there was similarity in subject matter and the way that I see. Another thing that started to happen for me was that I would look at something I did in my journal and then take that idea out and expand on it, formalizing the composition and technique while still keeping the spirit of the journal image. It was quite eye opening for me.

*"What they call talent is nothing but the capacity for doing continuous hard work in the right way."*

– Winslow Homer

## Assignment

Shoot one roll of film per week and make one image from that roll. Use one camera and one lens for this photography exercise. Keep the images in some form that you can carry around. Compile images for six months before you begin to edit them.

Questions to ask yourself include: what does being in the moment mean to pho-

graphers? I feel that it means that we are in tune with our equipment and in tune with our inner selves. I know that sounds like a lot of west coast blah blah, but think about it. Here are some simple check lists to ask yourself to make sure that you are "present" for your photography. What are you noticing right now? Is it photographic? How do you feel about

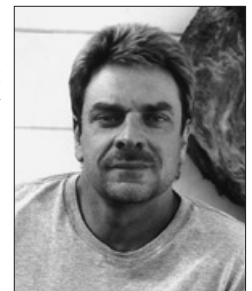
what you are noticing? Bet your thinking that all this stuff takes way to much time and takes you away from the moment, but the trick is to define the moment and how you are photographically relating to it, that's what defines a personal photograph.

## About the Author: Richard Newman

Richard Newman's work has appeared in numerous magazines with two catalogs of his work published. His work is in private collections as well as the White House Archives in Washington, DC. He has exhibited widely since 1988. Richard has led workshops throughout the southwest sponsored by Santa Fe Workshops, Hasselblad, Ilford, Mt. Carroll Center, TPS and The Calumet Institute. His personal

work is represented by the Ansel Adams Gallery in Peeble Beach, CA and the Swanstock stock agency, in Tucson, AZ. Richard is on the Advisory Board of the Project Workshops in Santa Fe NM, the Center for Photographic Art in Carmel, CA and the Texas Photographic Society. Currently, he is the Marketing Specialist to the Fine Art market for Calumet, Inc. and the editor of the *Newsletter for the*

*Photographic Artist*, a quarterly publication from Calumet that addresses new ideas and viewpoints in the field of fine art photography.



**The Texas Photographic Society** is a nonprofit organization of amateur and professional photographers whose purpose "is to support contemporary photography as a means for creative expression and cultural insight." With over 650 active members from 24 states, TPS focuses on the education and

artistic development of its members and the community by providing exhibitions, publications, education, and outreach programs. Tech Sheets, a benefit of membership, are edited by Jean Caslin and D. Clarke Evans. For information about the Texas Photographic Society or membership, please

contact:

D. Clarke Evans  
PMB 174  
6338 N. New Braunfels  
San Antonio TX 78209  
Clarke@texasphoto.com