



Andy Foster Photography

Wednesday, June 27, 2007

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of *The Montclair Times*

All the images look so different.

That's why visitors who come to Gallery 51, located at 51 Church St., are surprised to find that all the photographs in the current exhibition are by the gallery owner, Andy Foster.

To Foster, that is the ultimate compliment. As a commercial and fine art photographer, he likes to keep things fresh. "If you're bored or uninspired when you shoot, your images will most likely show it," he said.

Highlighting images from Foster's different projects, the exhibition includes large-scale panoramas; images from the "Chihuly Gardens and Glass" exhibition at the New York Botanical Garden; the Montclair Art Museum's "Art in Bloom" exhibits from 2005 to 2007; "Window Seat Photography," images taken from the window seat of a commercial airliner; and the "Art of Hair" for the Bangz Salon and Spa in Montclair.

Since he was young, Foster has always been fascinated with photography. His father was a photographer and had his own darkroom, setting Foster up with his own when he was just 14. "By the time I went to college I was already a pretty decent black and white photographer," he said.

Foster is a graduate of Rutgers College, where he majored through the Mason Gross School of the Arts in New Brunswick. In addition to teaching privately since 1995, he has sponsored and mentored more than 20 interns from Rutgers University, Gibbs College and Montclair State University. His commercial photography clients include the Montclair Art Museum (Art in Bloom, Gala), The New York Times (all products for the Company Store), eyewear by Donna Karen, Ralph Lauren and Mark Jacobs, real estate for The Bank of New York and Prudential, and surgical equipment for Vital Signs Inc.

Most of the artists represented at Gallery 51 are crossover artists, like Foster. "A lot of the work leans toward photorealism," Foster said. "I guess, all in all, we like to show work that definitely is

not in the 'I could do that' category."

Currently Foster is working on a presentation called "The camera always lies." He said that the major premise is that photography has always been a manipulative process, beginning with three basic questions: Do you think photography is more real than painting? Is digital photography less real than traditional photography? Is Photo-Shop cheating?

"I love to engage in this dialog because it's something people think about consciously or unconsciously quite a bit," Foster said. "People don't usually think of black and white as a special effect, but suffice it to say that if you woke up one morning and you ceased to see color, you'd be pretty freaked out."

When people come to the Gallery and ask Foster, "Did you PhotoShop it?" he said the answer is always "yes."

"PhotoShop is the digital darkroom," he said. "Most of my work could have been done in a traditional darkroom. From the post-production side, it's always been about dodging and burning, contrast and saturation. The only difference is, you can do it in a fraction of the time and reproduce it."

The following is a summary of Foster's different projects currently being shown at Gallery 51:

LARGE-SCALE PANORAMAS

Foster has been doing large-scale panoramas since college. He began shooting them on 35mm or 2 1/4-inch film and then printing them individually and assembling them by mounting and overlapping. "I pretty much use the same technique," he said. "Except now, I shoot them digitally, assemble them in PhotoShop, and print them seamlessly on a single sheet of paper."

WINDOW SEAT PHOTOGRAPHY

Focusing on things that don't seem real, but are, Foster said, "From low altitudes on take-off and landing to cruising at 30,000 feet, it's all a very unusual perspective."

CHIHULY 'GARDENS AND GLASS'

Foster approached the Chihuly "Gardens and Glass" exhibition at New York Botanical Garden the same way he photographs almost everything. Foster's interpretations of the glass were not straightforward, but rather off angles, reflections and macro close-ups, focusing on the kaleidoscopic qualities of the work.

"I believe that Dale Chihuly is the greatest living artist working in glass," Foster said. "Similar to Disney, Chihuly and his team can create dreamlike and to say the least, visually stimulating environments."

THE MONTCLAIR ART MUSEUM, 'ART IN BLOOM'

Foster is the photographer for the Montclair Art Museum's "Art in Bloom" exhibitions as well as their annual fundraising gala. Although he was commissioned to take photographs of the Museum's collection, he feels his own work stands as fine art pieces in their own right. "The 'Art in Bloom' images are shot in a way that purposely blurs the line between the floral arrangements and the original works of art," he said.

HAHNE'S TO SIENA

When Foster first moved to Montclair in 1997 he began photographing the Hahne's building,

which has been replaced by The Siena, and the surrounding neighborhood. He said, "You will be blown away when you see 10 years condensed into 10 minutes, through the use of time-lapse and photographing change from a fixed perspective. It's a visual history of that corner of Montclair."

When Foster is not working behind the camera, he loves to share his insights with others. Beginning this fall, he will be teaching two photography classes: "Digital Photography for Traditional Photographers" and "Self Publishing" at the Visual Arts Center of New Jersey in Summit.

For more information on the exhibit at Gallery 51, go to www.Gallery51.org; www.AndyFosterPhoto.com; or call the gallery at 973-744-4484.

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