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TOM BOVO

My artistic practice is engaged with the City of New York and the surprises that I find in the urban landscapes. I use my photographs to examine and reveal the relationships or interactions between the urban landscape and the people and objects that are the actors within the landscapes. These actors can come together in brief visual stories that are at times comedies, and at times tragedies.

Before I was born, my father was in the Army. While he was serving in the Korean War, my father put some cash in an envelope and mailed it to a US Army Post Exchange in Japan. In return, he received a camera by Army postal service. When I was young, my father gave me that camera. It was the first thing I used to create images and I have been compelled by that magic ever since.

Later, I studied in the studio art program at Columbia University with important established artists in New York. Most important for me was Andre Racz who taught drawing, and was a friend and mentor to a small group of us. He spent time with me away from the academic setting to discuss art as seeing, bringing me to his home and studio in Demerest, NJ where we could talk and compare our unique visions. When he was at Atelier 17 in New York, his prints could be described as being surrealist or expressionist, and later his matured style was more calmly representational and expressive. He is the source of the directness I feel for arriving at an image.

There was David Lund, who is identified as being of the New York School of abstract expressionism, taught painting and with took an exceptional interest in technique and composition, encouraging my pursuit of personal themes. David revealed the wonders of the use of color, and texture, two aspects of my photography.

Robert Blackburn taught printmaking, which involved the discipline of process—he was especially supportive and encouraging of my experimentation in monoprints. Monoprints may be the closest thing to photography. There is the need for discipline in the process, a unique and vibrant result, and in the way I use digital processes in photography, the ability to insert the hand of the artist into the product.

This mixture of influences, from abstract expressionist and surrealist, the more matured objective visions of the teachers I encountered at Columbia, and the art of the 70's and 80's form the primordial creative soup from which I come. Although the tools are secondary to the vision, I keep returning to the camera as a tool and medium of choice, especially now that digital imaging opens a whole range of possibilities to create images.

The images are not accidents—the camera does not reveal things that do not exist, but can reveal a world we filter out in normal vision. As a tool, it reveals—street reflections in a window, or an urban landscape reflected in the glass of a building. Using the images that a photograph captures is really an idealism and romanticism with form and color and profundity all wrapped up. There are visual patterns, textures, and colors at play, and ironies of the representational forms. At the same time, I am immersed in and part this process, so that what comes out of what I do is no different than who I am.

I control all of the creative aspects involved in my work, from the initial exposure to the final printed piece. My work rendered as giclée prints from high resolution files using acid free papers. My work is in private collections in New York, Washington DC, Tucson, Pasadena, Birmingham, and New Orleans.