

Collector's Corner Artist Spotlight: Photographer Richard Malogorski

By Julie K. Hagenbuch, hagenjk@bgsu.edu

Photographer Richard Malogorski was born in Kettering, Ohio and majored in Film Studies at Wright State University in Dayton. His work involves traveling throughout small towns and rural America, documenting the interiors and exteriors of churches, schoolhouses, machine shops and small grocery stores.

He uses a 100-year-old "Cirkut" camera, produced from 1904-1949, that can create panoramic images up to 90 inches long. As a result, he produces large format, silver gelatin photographs that showcase places often disappearing from the American landscape.

His work is available in the Collector's Corner, including this piece entitled "Golden Valley Church Near Reeder, North Dakota No. 1 (2008)" offered at \$450.00.



How would you best describe your art?

I am a strictly traditional photographer, in the sense that my work is camera-conceived with film and a dark room. There is no digital component in either the creation of the work or in the printing. There was a saying the camera never lies, however, that is no longer true, although it's not the camera lying, it's mainly Photoshop after the exposure is made. My work is very truthful.

This camera is almost extinct, as far as anyone using it, and I believe I'm the only one doing this style. My camera was made in 1915, and they're quite difficult to use. My work is basically tethered to reality.

What are the biggest challenges that come with the kind of photography you do?

Because the camera is over 100 years old, it required quite a bit of restoration. Also, I must find the film, which was difficult. Fortunately, Ilford is now providing it, but it's expensive.

Another challenge is finding the subjects that I enjoy photographing. When I travel, many of the subjects I look for, unfortunately, are no longer there, for example the repair and machine shops.

Who is the biggest influence in your art?

I was exposed to photography at an early age, because my father had a great interest in photography and other graphic arts, including painting. He was an excellent watercolorist, but he also had a dark room.

There is one very famous Cirkut photographer: Eugene Omar Goldbeck. He did primarily group portraits, but also what he called "Scenic Photographs." However, he is probably the most famous Cirkut photographer who has ever lived, and I admire his understanding of the camera and devotion to panoramic photography.

How do you break through creative blocks?

When I begin a trip, I do have some self-doubt, and it usually takes two or three days to get into the areas that are really what I am looking for. Overall, I try to not constantly try to create, but to take long absences from the work, and then when it is time for creativity, there's a great deal of enthusiasm for the process. Working in the dark room and preparing for these trips is all part of the process, but it is not the most creative part.

What famous artist could you meet and why?

It would be interesting to meet some of the individuals who created the cave paintings in France known as "Lascaux." These are some of the first works of art ever made and they're quite good. It would be interesting to ask them why they did it, as obviously there would be no monetary gain, and no one saw them for over 10,000 years.

Another artist I would like to meet would be the person who came up with the idea for the Serpent Mound in Ohio. This thing had to be very difficult to lay out. There were no helicopters or drones. How would you ever make something that big that long ago that you could only see from the sky, and why would you do it?