

Artist Portrait: Colin Winterbottom

A Capitol Hill artist and writer, Jim can be reached at ArtandtheCity05@aol.com

artandthe city



LEFT: Colin Winterbottom | ABOVE: The US Supreme Court in snowstorm

It's a picture of your private thoughts – the awareness of the way things seem when no one else is around: a snowy monument at night, a late-night Georgetown street in the rain, a familiar section of bridge. It's a place not clearly seen but somehow recognized.

Colin Winterbottom shoots Washington in black and white. He is not interested in the usual “patriotic theme park.” These are not iconic calendar shots of the monuments and important places, but the essential fragments of a greater reality – the particulars of a place hiding in plain sight.

He also photographs New York and old industrial sites, and still uses film.

He loves the grainy texture, especially when enlarged – it captures the

drama of the night and the abandoned optimism of small town industrial skeletons. He is drawn to the “hand of man” – our art, ambitions and preoccupations – but prefers shots without cars and people. Cars date a photo, and people hog all the attention. He wants the images timeless, or at least floating in a space without a clock.

He has a degree in economics, and worked for The Urban Institute, but started taking pictures on weekends and found a gift for composition and the ability to translate moods. It became a passion, and he has been a professional photographer for over 10 years, showing in many galleries around the area.

Colin Winter-

bottom is searching for the clues to the reality of a place – to elicit emotional impacts. He is looking for a particular mood. He connects with you as he strives to connect to the space around him – in the snow or rain or times when other people are away – when he can capture the imperceptible changes that creep in with time and the evolution of societies.

His work can be seen at www.colin-winterbottom.com.



US Capitol with scaffolding

Jim Magner's Thoughts on Art

My brain is trying to figure itself out, especially when it comes to art. What's the big attraction? And why do people see, experience and appreciate art in so many different ways and intensities? So, as a result, I'm compelled to browse research on brain structure, perception, thinking and that whole primordial bog we refer to as intelligence.

We speak of five senses: sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. But vision is at least three senses by itself – motion, color and luminance. The other senses are equally complex, and all enter our brains as streams of spatial patterns.

An image enters the pupil, gets inverted by the lens, hits the retina and creates a spatial pattern that gets relayed up the million or so fibers in the optic nerve. It takes a quick jaunt through the thalamus and heads for the primary visual cortex.

All upper-level thought processes take place in the "neocortex," but the cortex doesn't experience art directly. There is no light in my head ... or yours. It's dark in there (and preferably quiet). There is no picture, just electrical activity firing in patterns. As our eyes are constantly moving, the patterns are constantly changing and flowing like a mountain stream. Visual images are actually more like a song than a painting.

The cortex stores the electrical patterns of all the senses as memories and makes predictions based on those memories. The stored patterns become ever more complex, and interact with all of our acquired knowledge. So, it's no surprise that we see and interpret things so differently.

Still, what about creativity? Imagination? Humor? Why does a simple drawing or a Colin Winterbottom black and white photograph (see Artist Profile) stir emotions so differently in each of us? When someone tells me that there is one way to look at art, my brain wonders what's going on in that brain.

At the Museums

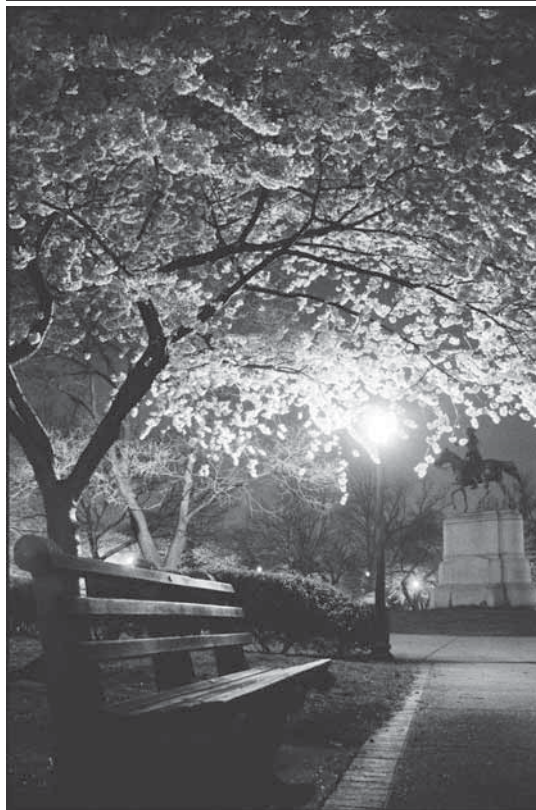
**Renaissance To Revolution:
French Drawings, 1500-1800
Darker side of light: Arts of
Privacy, 1850-1900
National Gallery of Art
4th and Constitution Ave., NW
To Jan. 18**

This is a thoughtful major exhibit that presents two separate but contiguous shows, one exiting into the other, and provides the purposes and stories behind the work.

"Renaissance To Revolution: French Drawings from the National Gallery of Art, 1500-1800," begins with a wonderful landscape watercolor dating from 1500, and extends through three centuries of French drawings to the neoclassical drawings of Jacques-Louis David. You will find yourself seduced by the "expressive heads" of

Jean-Baptiste Greuze, draftsman and showman extraordinaire.

The "Darker side of light: Arts of Privacy, 1850-1900," is primarily focused on French drawings and prints, but includes works from other European masters. This is a time when drawing for art's sake really takes off. But this is also a time when small works such as drawings and etchings



From Top to Bottom: The Bartholdi Fountain
Cherry Blossoms at Stanton Park

were kept private – not hung on walls but put away in portfolios to take out and linger over in quiet times. This personal experience is not usually associated with Impressionism, which is known as the celebration of light, but which could also be very complex, dark and distraught, reflecting much of the social upheaval of the period. www.nga.gov.

At the Galleries

**'Cityscapes'
Capitol Hill Art League
545 Seventh St. SE
Nov. 14-Dec. 4**

The CHAL November all-media show, "Cityscapes," opens Nov. 14, 5-7 p.m., with a reception and free gallery talk for the public. The juror for the show is Kim Ward, executive director of the Washington Project for the Arts (WPA).

Stick around for an hour-long concert with the musical group, 7 Sopranos, led by choreographer Peter DiMuro, for a combination of choreography, arias and art songs. Reserve a seat by calling 202-547-6839, e-mailing victor@chaw.org, or visit www.chaw.org.

**Kathryn Wiley
Foundry Gallery
1314 18th St. NW
Nov. 4-29**

Foundry Gallery's "Convergence," by local artist Kathryn Wiley, is a comprehensive display of recent paintings, collages and sculpture from "found objects." Wiley has been painting landscapes on location for years but has been working in the abstract for the past three. The small sculptures are created from old railroad spikes, gear wheels and obsolete machine parts, to define volumes in space and the artistic potential of discarded objects.

Opening: Nov. 6, 6-8 p.m. www.foundrygallery.org.

**Edward Burtynsky
Adamson Gallery
1515 14th St. NW
To Nov. 21**

The expansive, seductive and ultimately sobering photographs of Edward Burtynsky depict the hard and growing realities – the flip side – of the gloried accomplishments of mankind. "Oil" pulls together the whole story of our most coveted resource from extraction, refinement, transporting and consumption to the galloping effects on us and our planet. Burtynsky shoots oil fields, highways, industrial parks and scrap heaps from Shanghai to LA. Of course, there is a strange beauty to the whole mess, which he manages to isolate and capture. He refers to the body of work as "a dialogue between attraction and repulsion, seduction and fear."

There is also the intrinsic art of the picture that stays true to the distinct identities of the places exposed. The quality of dry light in Tucson, where I grew up, fights to overcome its exploitation as an aircraft graveyard. The bamboo ladders propped against an enormous, rusting Chinese tanker can only hint of a time and place that's being replaced in a frantic grab for a different place in a sociopathic international economy. www.adamsongallery.com. ★