

November 2011

Judi Stuffick

By Louisa J. Curtis



Clothesline, © Judi Stuffick

I've said this before, and once again it's true, that I often don't know who I am going to write about each month, and yet somehow the right person always presents them self. This time, I was writing an article for Agency Access' blog The Lab and I was asked the question, *Whose work do you find stimulating, interesting, or eye catching and why?* I gave three examples - each one for a different reason, and one of them is a young photographer from Philadelphia, [Judi Stuffick](#), whose work I first saw when I was judging for the ASMP Philadelphia Chapter's Annual Photo contest last year. I met her briefly at the opening in January this year. In fact, I specifically asked to be introduced to her because I was very taken by her "Projections" series. This, mind you, was before I even knew anything about the back-story. Then, when I was writing my article for The Lab, I recalled how taken I was by her project, so I asked her if I could use her as my example for personal projects – and she said "yes." I then learned even more about how and why this project came about which only made me love it more, so I decided it would make an interesting article for my readers as well.

Naturally, I began by asking Judi how and when her "Projections" project had come about. *Last summer as I was nearing my college graduation, I finally decided to begin working on a series of images relating to my father and his alcoholism. Growing up my home life was definitely filled with joy and happiness, but there also seemed to be a constant undercurrent of heartache and anxiety for my mother as well as my siblings and myself. By using personal photos turned into slides and projecting them onto my families' homes I was attempting to make a statement about, how over time, memories and their details fade and although a photograph is much more tangible than a memory, it doesn't necessarily make it more truthful.*

The idea to project slides created from my own personal family photos came about when doing research on the influence of the snapshot on both artists and society in general. Although many family photos are very amateur in regards to lighting and composition, their content is extremely intimate, pique's the viewer's interest and is instantly recognizable due to their ubiquity. The first projection I photographed was a photo of my father when he was a young boy, maybe 5 or 6 years old, and his brother onto some trees. I fell in love with how the slide now had the texture of the tree bark and how because of where the photo split onto the surrounding trees you couldn't even see that my uncle was initially also part of the photo, making the whole scene seemingly misleading. After that, I just wanted to see what other types of scenes I could construct. Give me three words that best describe your creative style? *Colorful, ambiguous and homemade.*



Christmas Tree, © Judi Stuffick

This has been a very personal and emotional journey, so I asked Judi what were the most challenging aspects of this project? *This project is so very personal. It is my images, of my family, on our homes, etc. and to be that open and honest is very strange.* And I also wanted to know what were the most rewarding aspects for her? *The most rewarding is to be able to be that open and honest about something so personal and having others relate to it and find it interesting. It is very cool to have put myself out there and have a positive reaction and I especially like watching others reaction to the images, especially my family.*

I was curious (and secretly hoping) as to whether she had any plans to continue with this particular project, or take it any further? *Yes, absolutely. I'm hoping to continue with photos of my grandparents when they were young and of their parents, and so on. By doing this project I'm able to study my family tree in a much more interesting way, at least for me.*

As a young emerging photographer, I asked Judi what she found most challenging about her chosen profession, and again what are the most rewarding aspects to being a photographer? *The most challenging definitely has to be the cost of being a photographer. When I finally had enough courage to move to Philadelphia and pursue photography I had no idea how expensive photo equipment and living on my own could be. The most rewarding is creating and holding a print in my hands. It feels very final compared to looking at it on the back of the camera or on a computer screen.* There she goes again, getting all “retro” on me, so I asked her when had she started taking photographs? *When I was in high school I took a black and white film class and absolutely fell in love with the dark room. I liked seeing how the world looked through my photos and I liked the whole act of creating something, especially in the dark room. Everything took much more time and kept me engaged. Because of this class I also ended up creating a pinhole camera for my senior project using a Quaker Oats container, which I still have.*

I asked Judi if she has an “essential” piece of photographic gear that she always carries with her – her must-have item, if you will? *I always just take way too much, too many lights, too many lenses, too many batteries, etc. Then, because I have so many items, I end up forgetting one really essential cord or something small like that, which is ridiculously frustrating.* And how about your most important piece of non-photographic gear? *My cell phone! During school I had a horrible piece of junk, which definitely didn't have Internet, or email or any apps, but somehow I managed to secure a ton of freelance work. Now that I have a phone that does in fact have all of those previously mentioned things, I can't believe I've ever lived without it!* Hey, they managed without them in the 60's!



The Deck, © Judi Stuffick

And here are my **ChatterDozen** quick fire questions with Judi's responses:

- 1) Who (dead or alive) do you admire? *My mother, she has had many struggles in her life, but somehow manages to keep her sense of humor. She has always given me the push needed to carry out my goals by supporting me and providing an excellent example of the benefits of hard work.*
- 2) What would you do if you weren't a photographer? *Magazine Editor – and I still want to do that one day.*
- 3) What was the last movie you saw? *Bridesmaids, and I was literally crying I found it so funny.*
- 4) What is your favorite TV show? *The Office, it was the best when Pam and Jim couldn't get together and also when Michael was still on the show.*
- 5) What is your favorite food? *Pad Thai [girl after my own heart!] from this delicious Thai restaurant in Philly's China Town called Banana leaf. It's a BYOB, inexpensive and just such a fun place - I had my birthday dinner there last year and had a blast.*
- 6) What is your favorite animal? *I just went to the Camden aquarium and couldn't believe how awesome all of the fish were. I was honestly like a little kid pointing and yelling "Wow! Look how big that one is!" It was so fun, and I think maybe my favorite are the seahorses. [Another great choice!]*
- 7) What is your favorite color? *Blue, it always has been. It makes me feel really calm and I think if I don't keep my love of it in check I'd probably dress like a "smurf" everyday.*
- 8) What is your favorite day of the week, and why? *Saturday, because I get to sleep in, and many weekends I travel to my hometown to spend time with my four year old sister.*
- 9) What is your favorite music, song, or band? *My music preference is pretty eclectic and varies greatly depending on my mood. I love contemporary Hip Hop, Reggae, Alternative groups, some Rock as well as older singers like Bill Withers, Bob Dylan, Frank Sinatra and Ella Fitzgerald.*
- 10) If you could be born in another period of history, when would that be and why? *1960's, young adults seemed to have stood up for what they believed in more often and really set the tone for future generations to do the same.*
[Now you're making me feel old! I was a kid growing up in the 60's, so the fact it is now something a young person looks up to is great. And judging by the current protests that are taking place against the world's financial institutions, today's generation is standing up all over again!]
- 11) If you could get on a plane tomorrow, perhaps to somewhere you have never been to before, where would you fly to and why? *Panama in Central America - My mother and her parents were born there, as well as myself, and many of my cousins and aunts and uncles still live there. I haven't been there since I was 19 and would like to continue my projection series there.*
- 12) If I handed you an Oscar for photography, whom would you be thanking in your acceptance speech? *My family. For better or worse, they have always been there to encourage me on my path as a photographer. My brothers look up to me and let me know how proud of me they are. My grandparents and parents cheer me on and help me remember that even when things are not going perfectly I can rest a little easier because I know I am very fortunate to have all of their love.*

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