

Portfolio ShowCase, Volume 3

Juror Statement – Stella Kramer

Creating a cohesive body of work is *the* photographer's challenge. Having a singular vision is more than choosing a genre or style. It is the benchmark of a serious photographer. And being able to edit one's own work to choose the perfect images that give form to a fully realized portfolio is even more difficult. It is a challenge for artists to be able to be objective about their own work. Yet in this competition I was struck by how well these challenges were met, with strong and consistent work throughout.

The work I chose surprised me with its variety, and stood out for singular quality and wonderfully executed style. It was not easy choosing the final work, as there was an inordinate amount of strong, touching photography. I was delighted to choose such a wide variety of genres and styles. Each portfolio met the criteria I believe makes a portfolio, and makes it memorable: personal commitment to the subject chosen, perfect choice of medium, and fully realized ideas.

I was struck by Christopher Perez' almost heroic portraits of the old steam engines that powered America during the last century. And in David Orr's work I saw a recreation of the book, in the way he took the rectangular shape and folded it into a sculpture that he then painstakingly photographed. Isadora Kosofsky's hauntingly beautiful and sometimes difficult to look at portraits of the elderly are sophisticated portraiture and incredibly strong photojournalism.

Stan Raucher's black and white portraits of Oaxaca are the family albums of a Mexican town, while Michael Ruggiero's trucker story is almost cinematic in its execution, and makes me feel the loneliness of the long haul driver. Peggy Jones mixes beauty and ugliness, adding to the lexicon of environmental photography, with her wonderful landscapes of discarded plastic blowing in the wind alongside Americas' highways. In Wrenay Gomez-Charlton's photographs we see the intimate and awkward story of her daughter's budding entry into adolescence

All the work showed deeply thought out personal visions that spoke to me. I am indebted to all the photographers who forced me to look, to think, and to question my own preferences. You challenged me and rewarded me by giving me such strong, confident, and new work to look at. The variety and unique portfolios of the fifteen chosen entries was an unexpected delight and proof to me that regardless of what is happening in our economy or our industry, great photography is alive and well across this country.