



Scissors, camera are tools for 'Picture Tallahassee' artist

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Photographer Riko Carrion can often be found around Tallahassee with a camera in his hand, but sometimes it's a pair of scissors instead. Owner and hairdresser at Wave-lengths Hair Salon and Studio, he considers his vocation to be just as much an artistic endeavor as his avocation of photography. The salon is where he shows his work, photographs adorning the walls alongside art that his wife Adrienne, a mosaic artist and painter, creates.

After having lived in many large cities like New York City and Los Angeles, Carrion and his wife chose Tallahassee as the perfect location to settle down and start a business. He first opened shop in Railroad Square, taking portraits and developing film in a dark room, but soon realized he was more interested in pursuing photography on his own time rather than in a studio. Visiting a wide range of locations in their off time on vacations, the couple often takes chances turning down side streets where Carrion's imagination is sparked.

"I yell stop and she pulls over like a cab driver," smiles Carrion. "She's instrumental in everything we do. She's my muse. We've both dabbled in every form and we tend to think of life as art."

Carrion is a family man and is proud to have two of his photographs chosen for "Picture Tallahassee: Where We Live, Work and Play." This juried, fine art photography exhibition was conceived by the Florida Association of the American Institute of Architects (AIA Florida) and COCA in celebration of local architecture. His first photograph is of a spiral staircase taken



Riko Carrion has a longtime interest in photography.
RICO CARRION

If you go

What: Picture Tallahassee: Where We Live, Work & Play
When: Opening Reception, 6-9 p.m., Friday, Jan. 27; Exhibition open 9 a.m.-5 p.m. through March 31
Where: Florida Association of the American Institute of Architects, 104 E. Jefferson Street
Cost: Free

in the Edison building's basement sixth months prior to its renovation.

His other photo is a stark contrast, taken outdoors at Cascades water fountain where children create their own colorful, architectural design. Carrion is excited to see how others view architecture during the opening reception from 6-9 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 27. He hopes that those who see his photos will be immersed and enjoy a different kind of beauty.

"People sometimes miss what's directly in front of them," says Carrion. "When you visit a new place your eyes are open

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to all things because they're not in your own hometown. I try and see beauty everywhere I look."

Carrion was always fascinated with photography thanks to publications like Life Magazine and National Geographic. His father bought a camera in Germany while he was in the army and kept it in the glove compartment of his Chevy Impala back in New England.

Carrion played around with the old camera and learned how to take pictures without a meter, which allows the photographer to control light, shutter speed and other aspects of the camera. At age 18, he spent all his money on the first camera of his own.

"What really started me was seeing the magic happen in a dark room," recalls Carrion. "I saw the print come up in the developer and that changed my life. From then on I was gobsmacked and addicted."

He gathered knowledge from every resource he could find and began teaching himself the ins and outs of a camera. A year spent in a New York art school gave him some technical skills, but he largely credits a series of Time-Life books of photography where he learned everything from composing to the process behind the art form.

The books featured many of the masters of black and white photography, many of whom became Carrion's largest influences. Among the top were Ansel Adams and Edward Weston. Their mastery of black and white landscape photos gave Carrion the impetus to begin his own explorations in different styles of photography. Many of his first photographs included people, until he recognized what he was truly interested in capturing.

"I realized later on

that I was a landscape photographer who had just been putting people into the pictures," says Carrion. "I've been doing this for almost 50 years now, so when I'm composing a picture through the viewfinder, I'm always looking for something in the foreground that isn't directly in the middle. It might be thrown over to one side of the picture, and I may have a horizon in a lower or upper third of the image."

Carrion states that while all pictures have a foreground, background, and a point of interest somewhere in the middle, he tends not to think about those elements while shooting. In terms of inspiration, Carrion enjoys perusing sites like Facebook and Instagram.

He considers himself an opportunist photographer, taking photos of whatever strikes him in the moment. Traveling all over the United States, he enjoys capturing national parks, though he hopes to one day travel to Yellowstone, the Grand Tetons, and the Redwood Forest, as well as capture some fall and winter images back in New England. The furthest Carrion's traveled is Utah and Arizona, and the farthest he's gone for a shot included some skillful hiking.

"I will do some crazy things sometimes to get a picture, but I don't think I'd hang by a rope on a mountaintop," jokes Carrion. "I was in North Carolina with a friend of mine recently and I climbed down into a ravine. There was a waterfall mixed with beautiful stones and these native giant bushes of flowers and I couldn't resist."

One of his favorite places to shoot in Tallahassee is Lake Lafayette at the Piney-Z Plantation as it offers some of the cleanest vistas and horizon lines in the hilly capital. Though he's captured some amazing sunrises and sunsets at the locale, it's the surrounding area and what the light does to the sur-



RIKO CARRION
Lake Lafayette is a favorite locale to photography for Riko Carrion.

rounding environment that captures Carrion's eye.

Thirteen years ago, Carrion purchased his first digital camera and for the first time had the ability to control color. Whereas before he would have to send film to a lab and hope it developed his desired color scheme, he could now use computer software to adjust color and light to match his original vision for a photo. He says these manipulations complete the creative process for him.

"The masters that I follow like Ansel Adams were huge manipulators of photography," explains Carrion. "You can take a picture, throw it up on a wall or screen, and it's incomplete as far as I'm concerned. Manipulating photos in the digital darkroom is essential to fulfilling your vision, and it's not unlike painting where you can see when it's finished."

Similarly to landscape photography, Carrion is drawn to architecture, and delights in finding abandoned or old buildings and homes to capture. It's part of a legacy of photographers that Carrion is proud to join. He explains that one of the main reasons early photographs contained

so much architecture and nature was simply because old cameras required stillness to capture an image, and nothing stands still quite like a building or mountain.

Carrion has explored burned down warehouses and remnants of structures in Connecticut and North Carolina. The more radical the architecture, the more he's attracted to it as it reveals how time has aged or imprinted on the building or home.

"We always see the finished product and what some people see as beautiful is common to me," says Carrion. "I'm seeking the uncommon. Places that might have been built as a structure and then converted into something else and see how certain things evolved over time."



January 29, 2017

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