

TRAVEL THE GLOBE THROUGH ART MCCONNELL'S LENS

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It all started with one picture. Jostled awake by turbulence, Art McConnell lifted his head to see a stunning sunset framing the wing of the airplane. Somewhere suspended between Munich and Berlin, he rummaged through the bag at his feet, located his camera and snapped a few photos. Moments later, the pilot corrected course and the image was lost but for the shots McConnell had taken.

A month later, a friend saw the image on the background of McConnell's computer and encouraged him to try selling prints. They spurred one another



ART MCCONNELL

"Munich Flight" is the image that started McConnell's photo adventure.

er to pursue photography as a hobby, purchasing Fuji XT-1 cameras and com-

plementary lenses. The act of catching such fleeting moments couldn't be more rock and roll to McConnell, a roadie whose day job, seeing a bird's eye view of a stage, could send him anywhere in the world for months with just days notice.

"My whole life is on the fly," remarks McConnell, who is grateful to have the opportunity to travel with his work. "I'm surrounded by music every day but I don't take pictures of the acts or behind the scenes. I'd rather take a picture of the day off when I'm wandering the city."

Initially, McConnell, 47, began taking photos as a release from the stresses presented in his line of work. An

Usher tour in 2004 took him to Europe for the first time. Plastered to the windows of the bus, he was in awe with every change of scenery and he snapped photos at a rapid fire pace. McConnell's love for theater and being behind the scenes combined with his drive to go places manifested in taking more jobs that toured domestically and internationally.

Though he calls Philadelphia the place he's from, McConnell's family was always on the move. His father was a pilot, while his mother, a painter, encouraged McConnell in his artistic pursuits as a poet and storyteller. He

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remained gypsy-like in his college years, hopping from school to school, but sticking with pursuits that related to acting and the theater. At one point in Illinois he was dorm-less and relied on the kindness of a professor to provide a housing solution.

"I didn't have a place to stay so she let me live on the stage as long as I would build the set," confides McConnell. "For a couple months I would go to class during the day then build the set for the show and sleep on the couch in the back. I had a great time because I was learning acting, stage combat, and voice training, and also how to hang the lights and set craft."

He briefly let some dust settle when he arrived in Tallahassee and earned his BFA in theater at Florida State. McConnell was less interested in learning lines, instead finding fulfillment in technical theater. The Donald L. Tucker Civic Center gave him his first job as a stagehand until The Moody Blues band came into town in 1994. It was at that concert that he became intrigued by the intricate set of ropes and supports that made up the stage and the brave gentleman who suspended above it all assembling the pieces together.

After discovering he had no fear of heights, McConnell jumped in a harness of his own and became a stage rigger. Pretty soon he garnered a reputation as the "out of town local" and go-to guy to call in the southeast, though he always maintained Tallahassee as his home base where he put down roots with a family of his own. His theatrical knowledge assisting him in rigging shows from Jacksonville to Nashville. He's shimmied upside-down at 290 feet in the air, straddled cables like the man on a wire, and used immense strength to stay suspended midair.

"It's exciting and I've done some hairy things," admits McConnell. "Nowadays you have to have lifelines and safety harnesses, but back in the nineties I would walk air conditioning ducts to go somewhere and drop a line in."

Though he doesn't climb as much anymore, he still organizes riggers and stage-manages, feeling fortunate for his tour family and dream job. He's taught the drummer of Twenty-One Pilots stage combat, played pool with idol Roger Waters, and listens to some of his favorite rock music. All the while, McConnell began cultivating his photographic eye by acting as a videographer. After rigging all afternoon, he would jump in the pit of a concert with a camera on his shoulder, projecting live images onto the surrounding screens for

IF YOU GO

What: Travel Dreams Photography
When: 6:30 p.m. on Sept. 6 for Opening Reception.
 Exhibition runs 11 a.m.-9 p.m., Sept. 6-23
Where: Oglesby Gallery, 75 N Woodward Ave
Cost: Free
Contact: For more information, call 850-644-4737 or visit traveldreamsphotography.com.

concertgoers in the nosebleeds.

Over the years, he's learned different filming techniques from video directors. In the chaos of rock concerts, McConnell focuses on the fingers dancing on a guitar, then pans away for a fade out. Since the output is broadcast unedited, he has learned to find the captivating image compositions based on instinct and without much preparation.

"I was running around with them onstage as if the video camera was another instrument," explains McConnell.

"I've slowly gotten better over the years and through my work I've learned how to incorporate the camera eye into photography. Now when I go walk a town with my camera, I'm looking at the shadows and the way the reflection on a window looks and it's become fun for me."

He seeks out the history of a city through its structures, and finds his favorite places to photograph in the unique architecture of cathedrals and castles that aren't typically found in American landscapes. Oslo, Norway's Frogner Park beckons with its sculptures, as does a "Scooby-Doo spooky" graveyard in Glasgow, Scotland with crooked headstones and tilted crosses. Some of his more subdued images tell adrenaline-filled stories like "Holy Lan-

terns." While on the Seal tour, he was given three hours to explore Jerusalem with a small group. They hopped in a cab with a man who spoke broken English and dropped them off in the hubbub of the walled city where they could get lost by the turn of a corner. Merchants selling everything from fly-buzzed fish to fine carpets competed for their attention, however, McConnell's serene photograph sought to immortalize his quiet moment resting his hand on a holy object.

"We found a guide who knew every nook and cranny," describes McConnell. "He took us to the place where Christ had been taken after the crucifixion and lanterns were hung over marble slab where they laid him down. The picture to me resembles the peace of the event amongst the chaotic world that surrounds it now."

Owning an art gallery in Hannibal, Missouri, McConnell's mother



ART MCCONNELL

"Figure Fountain" is of the water fountain that is in the middle of Frogner Park in Oslo, Norway.



ART MCCONNELL
 Art and Felix the Cat, a cheetah named after the famous cartoon. This photo was taken in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Tanita Martin • Maurice Thames



Charles V. Martin and Spring D. Vaughn are pleased to announce the wedding of their daughter, Tanita Martin to Maurice Thames, son of Marie Thames and the late Woodrow Thomas.

Tanita received a Masters Degree in Social Work from Jackson State University. She is currently a Mental Health Therapist in Jackson, MS.

Maurice attended Jackson State University. He is currently a Master Sergeant in the United States Marine Corps.

Tanita is the granddaughter of Charlie Martin and the late Mae Francis Martin and Barbara Vaughn and the late James Vaughn.

Maurice is the grandson of the late Bernard and Daisy Bober and the late Leon Thames Sr. and Minnie Cuberson.

The wedding will be held on Saturday, September 3, 2016 at 4:00 p.m.

The location will be at: St. John M. B. Church 4895 Medgar Evers Blvd. Jackson, Mississippi.

2016 Active Living Expo

