Through a lens sharply: Photofest features locals

By Randi Atwood
SPECIAL TO THE DEMOCRAT

Through the lenses of their cameras, photographers give us unique glimpses into the world around us.

The Council on Culture & the Arts showcases the work of area photographers in its Photofest 2010 exhibition, on display through Jan. 7 at the Artport Gallery at Tallahassee Regional Airport.

Here’s a look at three of the featured photographers:

Timothy Moore

“Much of what I photograph is right here in the city, (at places) like Waverly Pond, Lake Ella, Chapman Park and Maclay Gardens,” says Timothy Moore. “I hope my work challenges people to see things they pass by everyday in a different light.”

A native of North Florida, Moore has lived in Tallahassee off and on since 1959, and made it his permanent home in 1983. He has been taking pictures for nearly 40 years, but only began exhibiting his work in the past five. He has since shown his work all over the area, and one of his photographs, “Tallahassee Skyline,” was even chosen to be the cover shot of the city’s 2010 budget publication.

Moore emphasizes the importance of a photographer’s equipment in the final product.

“I remember my first camera as a Sears 120 bellows from the 1950s,” he says. “For many years, my trusty Nikon F3 Hp was the tool of choice, but technology gives us new tools with new avenues to explore.”

Now Moore works exclusively in digital photography. He believes that the cost-effectiveness of digital cannot be matched by traditional film because of the sheer number of images one can take. Shooting 20 rolls of film would be cost prohibitive, he explains, but digital allows the photographer to explore as many possibilities as he or she wants.

The processing of prints is also important. Moore processes prints individually with archival pigment, so each is unique.

George Dawson photographs natural world for textbooks.

“Many of my prints are mistaken for paintings,” says Moore. “I do consider them a form of painting, with photons and electrons delivering pigment to canvas, much like oil or acrylic deliver pigment to canvas.”

Nothing is more important for a photographer, though, than the camera’s lens. His advice to beginning photographers is to buy the best lenses they can afford.

“The back of the camera doesn’t matter that much,” explains Moore. “The lenses make the difference. It’s better to have one really good lens than a drawer full of inexpensive ones.”

George Dawson

A professor emeritus who recently retired from the FSU Science Education Program after 30 years, George Dawson has been taking pictures since the age of 12. But he never took formal photography classes until recently.

“I used to walk to school every day, and on the way I’d pass a photo studio,” Dawson remembers. “I got to be friends with the man who owned it and he’d give me chemicals to develop my own photos. I taught myself how.”

For many years, Dawson shot traditional film and had his own darkroom, but he recently converted to all digital formats. One of his latest projects is to scan his favorite images out of his collection of almost 4,000 slides.

Dawson says he loves capturing and bringing home specific moments in nature that excite him. But the images he brings home have a life far beyond a family photo album. Many of them are used in the science textbooks that he designs.

Dawson often travels and collaborates with his wife and fellow photographer, Joel. In September, when Dawson was a guest professor at the University of Johannesburg, they set aside a week just to travel and take pictures in South Africa, Tanzania, Namibia, Mozambique and Swaziland.

He says they occasionally run into problems with weight limits and their photography equipment.

“We pack few clothes and a lot of cameras,” laughs Dawson. “There was almost a fiasco in the Komodo islands. We were filming dragons and we were overweight going back to Bali. We had to empty our baggage of peanut butter and jelly so we could get our tripods on the plane.”

Heather Murphy

At 23, Heather Murphy is one of the youngest photographers in the exhibition. The Tallahassee native and graduate of Lincoln High School is currently the assistant financial officer at New Leaf Market.

“An artist with a mathematical side is not something that you see that often,” says Murphy. “I spend most of my day thinking log-
Drumming up questions

Each week COCA (with the help of local teachers) will challenge you with questions illustrating what local students learn in their arts classes.

Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grade Music Student?

This week’s questions are courtesy of Margaret McClearn, music teacher at Astoria Park Elementary School. Her fifth-grade students are learning about drumming from the West African and Caribbean tradition.

1. For what purpose is music — particularly drumming — used in West Africa?
2. Can you define the term “complementary rhythm patterns”?
3. What is improvisation in music?

Do you know the answers to these questions? E-mail them to cultural@cocanet.org. The first person to submit a correct set of answers will “get a gold star” in next week’s TLH. Check back here next Sunday for the answers.

Answers to last week’s fourth-grade art questions from teacher Cynthia Kent-Touissant:

1. What is a symbol and why is it important to understand how symbols are used, especially in art class?
   
   Answer: A symbol is something that represents a larger idea. Understanding how symbols are used in art shows us that art is one of mankind’s communication systems. Children at

PHOTOS

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ically and working with numbers. My photography is a creative outlet for me.”

She spends at least one day a week on her photography, but hopes to soon be able to return to school and spend more time with her cameras. After being inspired by her photography instructor at Tallahassee Community College, Barbara Edwards, Murphy now plans to major in photography at FAMU with an eye toward doing it professionally.

The subject matter of her photos vary widely — she shoots whatever catches her eye at the moment.

“I don’t plan out my photographs completely because I want a sense of spontaneity in my work. I like to make discoveries as I go along,” explains Murphy. “Not planning helps keep the images fresh.”

Like many photographers, Murphy began with traditional techniques but has recently turned to digital photography. She is particularly interested in exploring the ways that digital and non-digital techniques can be mixed and used together.

“Sometimes I want to look at things from a different angle,” says Murphy. “I’m still exploring, trying to find my style.”

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