

Featured Photographer: John Wawrzonek

John Wawrzonek's immaculate fine art images of the natural landscape look at though they were made in the midst of virgin forest or on the shores of a hidden mountain lake. The truth is quite the opposite. Virtually all were made within a few feet of ordinary roadsides.

John spent several years, "hauling 40 pounds of equipment around the woods, before I noticed that I couldn't see anything when I'm in the woods." he says. "The highway offered a better view. You're separated from the scene, so you can see the forest and not just the trees. Plus you can cover a lot of territory in a car," he adds.



His first successful images were made from the shoulder of Interstate 90 west of Boston, where the elevated roadway gave him a view into the canopy of trees, a perspective nearly impossible any other way, he explains

Educated as an electrical engineer at MIT, he started work in the late 1960's as one of the first employees of Bose. When personal events in the mid-seventies precipitated what he calls his, "first mid-life crisis," he began his work photographing nature with a 4 x 5 view camera, bypassing the limitations of 35mm.

"I don't like photos that give themselves away as photos, with grain and muted colors and out-of-focus areas," John says. He wanted then, as now, "to capture as much as possible of what is in front of me."

At first he was puzzled with his nature photographs because they looked like so many others he had seen. It was only after several years that his point of view developed and he began to make more abstract images that emphasized texture in the landscape, he says. With this point of view and more time in the field, he began to understand what visual elements drew his eye and began to develop more fully his artistic vision.

He "discovered spring," along I-90 west of Boston as he, "watched the colors of the foliage budding into a pointillist ensemble of wild color," John remembers. He became aware that he wasn't, "interested in the thing itself, but in nature's graphic elements, primarily color and texture.

He also found himself concentrating on just a few places, returning many times to take advantage of the changing seasons and the evolution of a place over a period of years.

"I have been drawn to specific places for years at a time, usually by the intensely intriguing subjects concentrated in these places," John states on his website, www.lightsonfineart.com. "Returning again and again, I found myself spending five to ten years (and more) becoming ever more intimate with the area and its subjects."

Two of those places were within feet of the breakdown lane of the Massachusetts Turnpike, one in Weston, the other at exit 11 in Millbury. Some of his most popular photos were made while within a few feet of the guardrail, most often in the early morning. And sometimes without even the guardrail to separate him from rush-hour traffic.



"I got to know the state police really well. Eventually they told me to get a permit or get arrested. So I went to the turnpike authority and signed a release and then they left me alone," he recalls.

Since then he's traveled farther a field — to Walden Pond in Concord, MA, to the blueberry barrens of Maine, that he describes as, "30,000 acres of rainbow in the fall," and Acadia National Park with an occasional trip to the south and west. He's published two books, both with text by Henry David Thoreau, has had numerous exhibitions, and is represented by a number of galleries.

However, his focus has remained consistent, to record the ensembles of detail and texture in the landscape and how it evolves over the years.

"A place is never the same. The light changes, it may be windy or calm. You can't predict what you'll get. It is always different," he says. "It changes with the seasons, the weather and simply the evolution that happens to the wonderful flora of New England."

In recent years, as the quality of digital cameras has improved, he's adopted the new technology. He uses a Sony A850 full-frame digital camera, primarily with a 24-70mm Zeiss zoom lens

"Digital gives superb color rendering," John says "compared to a 4 x 5 view camera. In certain situations you can get the absolutely best image with digital, usually by combining many images, sometimes to get great depth of focus and sometimes to capture extraordinary detail by stitching many frames together."

Throughout his photographic career, he's also been known as a master printer who remains on the leading edge of traditional and digital color printing technology as it has developed over the decades. He prints all of his own work, often as prints as large as 4' X 8' .

He and Mark Doyle refined their skills together as colleagues for several years and remain friends and collaborators.

"Mark is the best fine art printer I know. He's done it for a long time. He uses the best equipment and he's worked with many fine photographers over the years," John says. "He's built up an exceptional level of expertise."

John's current projects include making digital images of flowers in his studio. His current interest is daylilies and mums. As he turns 70 this September, in the back of his mind are plans for a retrospective exhibit and book, but he's still too busy photographing and printing to devote much attention to these.

Currently his work may be seen on exhibit at **Cambridge Seven Associates**, and at his website, www.lightsonfineart.com.

AutumnColor to Host Night Photo Workshop, Sept. 10

Night photography presents plenty of challenges—from composing and focusing in the dark to noise reduction and post-processing—but with the potential reward of dramatic and memorable images.

On Saturday, September 10, AutumnColor will host a workshop at our Worcester, MA, facility that addresses all those challenges and more, conducted by The Adirondack Photography Institute.

Mark Bowie, night shooting specialist and author of, “The Light of Midnight: Photographing the Landscape at Night,” will lead workshop participants through all the stages of making successful images at night.

Beginning with an instructional session at AutumnColor and followed by a hands-on night field session in the Worcester vicinity, Mark will cover a broad range of tips and techniques that will enable participants to take their photography beyond daylight shooting to capture the wonder of the landscape at night.

Check it out and register soon, because space is limited. [Get complete information here.](#) To register call the Institute at 518 478-8592.

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Thanks for your interest.

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