

MILL STREET SALON  
BEYOND THE IMAGE



KEAN UNIVERSITY

## The Mill Street Salon: Beyond the Image

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MILL STREET SALON  
BEYOND THE IMAGE

November 10, 2014 – February 12, 2015

Karl and Helen Burger Gallery  
Maxine and Jack Lane Center for Academic Success  
KEAN UNIVERSITY





## **MILL STREET SALON**

Pushparaj Aitwal

Mike Peters

John Michael Flores

Alex V. Fernandez

Bruce M. White

Ethan Y. Feinsod

Walter S. Oliver

Alan Schindler

Alexander Noble



Alex V. Fernandez,  
*Mammoth Spring Trees*,  
Yellowstone National Park



## Introduction

*Beyond the Image* presents the work of nine New Jersey-based photographers who are committed to pursuing universal themes of the human experience in their art. For some, inspiration comes from internal quests to understand relationships and intimacy. Others find inspiration in external stimuli, by documenting what they see in the social and cultural landscape, exploring the character of people and places beyond what is familiar. Others meditate on their reverence for the natural world and express that with their photographs. These are important stories that may delight or disturb the viewer. Pushparaj Aitwal, Ethan Feinsod, Alex Fernandez, John Michael Flores, Sandy Noble, Walter Oliver, Mike Peters, Alan Schindler, and Bruce White of the Mill Street Salon are all committed to telling these stories with their cameras.

The artists in group shows are typically chosen on the basis of a theme, but *Beyond the Image* represents the creative voices of an existing group of photographers who call themselves the Mill Street Salon. Once a month, they get together at Mill Street in Bernardsville, New Jersey, to socialize, discuss their ongoing projects, and challenge one another. The intellectual environment they have created for themselves is based on the traditional etiquette of centuries gone by, in which guests would assemble in a formal reception room to discuss social issues, art, politics, and more. Their approach is a refreshing counterbalance to our world of non-stop picture-taking, selfies, phone pix, Facebook posts, and momentary glances at hundreds of images a day.

*Beyond the Image* is part of an ongoing series of biennial shows at Kean University's Karl and Helen Burger Gallery entitled *The Garden Statement*, which intends to address the idea of regionalism—a notion that can no longer be neatly defined by traditional physical limits. One can easily argue that in this global age the entire world is morphing into a single “region” of seven billion human beings and that regionalism has increasingly gone out the window as access to ideas and people in far-away places has become literally free and easy. Artists are not the only ones who engage their life experience in this way, by rethinking regionalism and by creating virtual communities.

This exhibition is an opportunity to take a break from our busy state of mind, which is filled with too many messages, thanks to modes of communication that are more and more on-the-fly, and thanks to emails and mobile devices. By contrast, the Mill Street Salon photographers believe that it takes time to make photographs and that it takes time for their work to resonate and communicate. Intrinsicly, their art takes time.

**Neil Tetkowski**

Director of University Galleries





## Pushparaj Aitwal



Before coming to Caldwell University in 2007, my knowledge of religious sisters was mainly confined to those who had dedicated their lives to God, mostly through preaching and social works. Coming from Nepal with its Christian population of less than two percent, I was ignorant of the fact that sisters are people just like us. They work in various fields and are blessed with many amazing talents. I think being at Caldwell University has been one of the best experiences of my life. Once here, I saw sisters as leaders, teachers, poets, authors, singers, musicians, television producers, artists in various fields, golfers, doctors, and social justice workers, among other roles. I have had the opportunity to work for and with very talented sisters over these last seven years, and I feel very fortunate to know them, not just as religious women but also as people who take great joy in being who they are. Sisters perform many great works that often go unnoticed by the general public, perhaps because of their calm manner and their habit of keeping a low profile. The idea of photographing sisters showing not just their talents and works but also their personal side evolved from my experiences with them. We all know them as sisters, and my work is an attempt to know them on a more personal level.

I spent my early childhood in a farming village in the Himalayas. My interest in photography began as a child's simple reaction to not having ever seen my grandparents. I never knew what they looked like, and it was discomfiting not being able to put faces to their names. In 1996 I was brought to Kathmandu in Nepal to study at Budhanilkantha School with a full government scholarship. I did not study photography in school but learned it on my own with a camera borrowed from friends and from photography books in the school library, *National Geographic* magazines, and a lot of experiments. This led to a project recording the people and life of a small, tightly knit Nepalese and Indian Community of Rung, where I intentionally focused my lens on the elders as the keepers of traditions. What was originally a photography project evolved into a passion for knowing more about the traditions and customs of my people and preserving them as much as possible for the future generations. My first exhibition was *En Rungmung*, which was very well received. In 2007 I came to the United States to study at Caldwell University and graduated in 2011. I have worked since then as a photographer both in the U.S. and in Kathmandu.



*Sister Elizabeth Michael Boyle*



*Sister Mary Immaculate*



*Sister Honora Werner*





## Ethan Y. Feinsod



Close to 50 years ago, I bought my first macro lens. It allowed me to get close to objects and to concentrate on the designs and patterns rather than the object itself. This new way of seeing quickly became ingrained in my work as a photographer and affected how I viewed the world. To this day, I am still interested in how patterns appear, not only in nature, but in humanity as a whole. For the past 30 years, I have been attending the world's largest antique auto flea market in Hershey, Pennsylvania. As both an antique car collector and a photographer, I find it a perfect place to explore and tie together both passions. Year after year, I have taken notice of the vendor displays, not just the objects themselves, but how the seller had arranged the objects. My lens was drawn to the textures and patterns of old metal, the rust and faded paint of old doors and fenders, and the inanimate objects and their patterns began to develop identities and personalities. As I got to know more people through the years, I began to make a connection between object and owner. It is in this new chapter of my work that I begin to explore the culture of the people at the market and their relationship to the merchandise.

Born and raised in New Jersey, I grew up behind the lens as a second-generation photographer. My interest in fine arts diverged from my family's background in commercial and event photography. After attending the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, and Hartford Art School, I received my graduate degree from Teachers College, Columbia University. Since then my focus has been on teaching fine-art photography at the high school and college level, which allows me the freedom to continue my own work exploring the human dynamic behind rituals and hobbies.



*Man with White Cowboy Hat*



*Two Friends with Early Car*





*Man with Collection of Wrenches*



*Manikin with Bicycles*







## Alex V. Fernandez



I gained a deep appreciation for the natural world as a child, thanks to many family camping vacations. I have continued to explore wild places as an adult and have gained respect, even a sort of reverence, for the natural world. People and their creations are, of course, part of nature, but the human world is largely a denial of this fact. We try mightily to separate ourselves from the natural world, from the things we cannot control, from each other, from suffering and death. This separation is an illusion, but it feels very real.

I am fortunate to be able to travel to beautiful places in my search for images. These have a value far beyond the pleasure we may get in looking at or experiencing them. It is important that wild places remain wild, even if they have to remain difficult to access. Needless to say, I am an ardent environmentalist. When we protect the environment, we are protecting our home.

In my photographs I try to show things as they are. Some photographs were taken in Yellowstone National Park during deepest winter. The park can be a forbidding, desolate place, and life is difficult there. Some of my favorite environments to shoot in are winter and the desert. Death is never far away, but life is all around.

My process is to photograph with digital 35mm SLRs and a variety of lenses. I enjoy post-processing, but I limit myself to traditional darkroom adjustments, such as color balance, exposure, cropping, and sharpening. I never add or remove content from my images.

I began making photographs when I was 10, when my father lent me an old Agfa Solinette 35mm camera loaded with black-and-white film. He told me how to set the shutter speed and aperture and showed me the exposure instructions on the film box. As the years went on, I continued to make images, to read books on photographic technique and processes, and to learn. After I got my first part-time job at 15, I built a small darkroom in my basement and spent a lot of time making prints of the photographs I took, mostly around my hometown of Kearny, New Jersey. I was unable to go to art school to pursue my photographic education, so I put down the camera for more than 20 years. I settled into working for a large telecom firm, where I am the manager of a technical support group. My wife shares my interest in the natural world, and we have traveled and photographed a lot of beautiful places. As I photographed, my seriousness as a photographer grew. Today I work on my photography as much as my demanding work schedule allows, and I hope to become a full-time photographer when I retire from my current job.

Opposite: *Trees and Mist*,  
Yellowstone National Park





*Bison and Snow, Yellowstone National Park*



*Trees and Snow Crystals, Yellowstone National Park*





*Sparring Bison, Yellowstone National Park*







## John Michael Flores



As a travel writer and photographer, I have seen much of the country from the seat of a motorcycle, from the quiet woods and small towns of Maine to the grandeur of the American Southwest. This set of photos explores an idea hatched on one of these trips—images depicting the sometimes contentious, sometimes harmonious relationship between the built world and the natural world. These images deviate from the standard pictorial representations in my travel photography and move toward the abstract.

*Our Indomitable Will* is a South Dakota prairie scene bisected by the railroad, the tool that pried open the West to development and connected the two coasts. There are thousands upon thousands of miles of track across the country, nearly ubiquitous and instrumental in the growth of the nation.

*Our Mastery of the Elements* is a moody, seemingly natural image that is almost completely fabricated—a distant light reflects off the still waters of the D&R Canal, trees, and power lines silhouetted against the dusk.

*Our Insatiable Appetite* depicts a quarry that is slowly, inexorably, literally reducing a mountain to rubble. In the distance, trees overlook the industrial scene.

A gold-finished Kodak Disc camera opened up a whole new way for me to see, experience, and share the world, even if it was just the world of a geeky teen trapped deep in 1980s suburban New Jersey. Photography has been my constant companion ever since, on journeys near and far, accompanying medical missions in the Philippines, capturing the energy of gubernatorial campaigns, sharing the work of nonprofits, and—like everybody else—photographing cats. Photography is a language that I am still trying to master, deceptively simple yet infinitely varied. I am currently a contributing editor at *RoadRUNNER Magazine*, the country's largest motorcycle touring publication, and *BMW Owner News*, both of which include the enviable task of riding motorcycles to beautiful places, taking photos, and telling stories of the journey. I am also the publisher of [NewCameraNews.com](http://NewCameraNews.com).



*Our Insatiable Appetite*



*Our Mastery of the Elements*





## Alexander M. “Sandy” Noble



Inspired by the work of Shelby Lee Adams and Arnold Newman, I have developed a keen interest in two types of portraiture: environmental portraits and documentary portraits. Environmental portraits, often commissioned by the subject, require a delicate balance to assure that each portrait is honest, reveals the unique character of the subject, and provides a pleasing likeness.

Documentary portraits, on the other hand, are less polished and emphasize the subjects' inner strength, with less regard for the carefully manicured image shown to the public. These are stronger images, often raw, but never dishonest, never unkind. They are not made for the subject, nor are they made for the photographer. Documentary portraits are made to celebrate a moment in time, to help us all remember that those who do not have the look of the current concept of beauty are, indeed, beautiful in their unique way.

The portraits that are my contribution to this exhibition are documentary portraits. They are “gifts” offered to me by the generous people pictured—some of them neighbors, others initially strangers, now some of them friends.

During the times I visited with and photographed these subjects, I learned a great deal about them, about myself, and about the world in which I live. But most importantly, I learned that intimacy of all forms is essential to life.

I was raised in Bloomfield, New Jersey, and hold degrees from Michigan State University and New York University's Stern School of Business. I was a lieutenant in the U. S. Navy. My education in photography included studying at the International Center for Photography, the Maine Photographic Workshop, and by assisting professional photographers specializing in annual reports, architecture, cars and motorcycles, fine art, and people and fashion. Now I have my own business, Sandy Noble Photography. I have had two solo shows: *07924 ... It's the People* at the Bernardsville Public Library, and *The Best Places In New Jersey* at the New Jersey Institute of Technology. My work has won awards from American Society of Media Photographers New Jersey, the Somerset County Cultural Commission, and the Hopper House. A book of my architectural photographs was published by Rutgers University Press.



*Ken with Priscilla*



*Steve with Sarah*

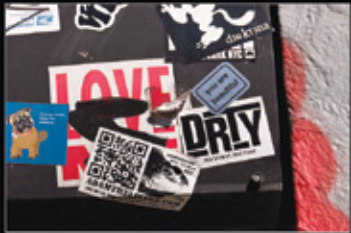




*Amie with Amie*



*Annabel with Eric, Sam and Lynne*



Lonely

Plaintive

## Walter S. Oliver



Anarchy, simply defined by the Oxford English Dictionary, is “a state of disorder due to the absence or non-recognition of authority.” The act of creating graffiti can be considered fundamentally anarchic behavior, but how does that relate to emotion? Emotions can’t be legislated or mandated; they don’t play by any sort of rules, and human beings can’t really control how they feel.

It’s not much of a stretch to view emotions as anarchic in nature as well. *The Anarchy of Emotion* collection is about people who have deep feelings and are compelled to display those feelings in public places, sometimes flouting the law. These works are typically anonymous, which suggests the makers have a certain ambivalence about their feelings. Still, these are strong feelings over which the individual has little control. Both the feelings and their public display demonstrate a “non-recognition of authority,” and to me, these images suggest the anarchy of emotion.

I was raised in New Bedford, Massachusetts, but have lived in New Jersey since 1983. Largely self-taught, I have explored many facets of photography and run my own business, Walter S. Oliver Photography, shooting product photography and photographing other artists’ work, as well as producing fine art prints. I have exhibited in many solo and group shows over the years, and my work is in many private collections. I have won several awards and served as president of the Nutley, New Jersey-based Tri-County Camera Club, guiding the club’s transition from film to digital photography.





She



Adore Hateful

Ambivalent



Declaration

Heart







## Mike Peters



In June 2010, I was waiting for my bus at Port Authority in New York City and had a few minutes to spare. It was the evening rush hour at the end of a week on a hot day, and the faces of those around me reflected their obvious exhaustion and the anticipation of getting to their bus before it left the station. As a former commuter, I empathized with what I saw written all over their faces and bodies, so I made some photos at a street corner, as they waited for “Don’t Walk” to change to “Walk” so they could make that last dash into the bus terminal.

For four years, I have returned to that spot whenever I have had the chance. The seasons, with their ever-changing light, have all left their mark on the people I have encountered, regular working people, like me, going about their daily journey. I am glad to have had this opportunity to bear witness to their lives. It is what I do.

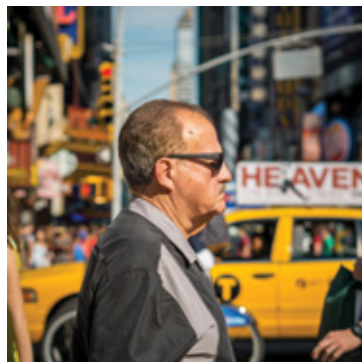
During the past four years, I transitioned from shooting my personal projects on film with a square-format camera to shooting all digital with a camera that also shoots square. I prefer squares for my personal work, as it reflects the simplicity of my vision and my subject matter. I do not crop my images after the fact, preferring to make the image I want in the camera. I also prefer color, as it is how I see the world.

How people present themselves, the clothes they wear, their faces and their body language are all elements that allow the viewer to imagine a story about what they see. The ordinariness of these people lies in stark contrast to life as portrayed in the media. There is nothing at all sensational going on here, just life being lived by ordinary people who do not regularly demand our attention. These are the people and places I am interested in; these are the people and places that my work is all about.

My affinity for the gritty industrialized streetscape was cultivated when I was growing up in Kearny, New Jersey. Photography discovered me in high school and gave me a means of expressing how I saw the world. I studied photography at the Fashion Institute of Technology and worked for years as a commercial photographer. Between 1983 and 1986 I was a newspaper staff photographer, and since then I have freelanced for corporate and editorial clients. I am currently the director of Photographic Services at Montclair State University, where I am a member of the creative team producing images and video for all media. Despite years of making a living as a commercial photographer, I continue to make images purely for my own pleasure.



*Evening Rush Hour, 42nd Street and 8th Avenue, North West Corner*







## Alan Schindler



*Passaic River Encounters* — we cross this untamed circuitous river multiple times daily but pay little attention to it. Abused and abandoned, one of the most polluted rivers in the United States, the Passaic slowly threads its way through every socio-economic and cultural landscape in northern New Jersey. I knew there had to be life and relevance to this historic river, so I began walking, driving, kayaking, and digging for the stories that this river held. These images represent a few of the many encounters I have had along the river. These are stories that matter. The project is ongoing.

I hold a BFA in photography from Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California. My recent work has been commissioned by architectural, corporate, healthcare, nonprofit, and educational organizations.





*Shorty, Paterson, New Jersey*



*Hector's Memorial, Paterson, New Jersey*





*Group, Paterson, New Jersey*



*Ray & Kayla, Paterson, New Jersey*





NO  
PARKING  
ANY  
TIME

BICICLETA  
SEMPRE



## Bruce M. White



Because I am professionally based in the world of studio still-life photography, where I have total control of all aspects of picture making, I like to make photographs for myself that rely more on capturing light and movement and imagery in uncontrolled situations. I never pose subjects or manipulate my images in post-processing, other than to apply basic color correction, brightness, and cropping adjustments. It's my way of losing all of the control that I have at my disposal in the studio, which forces me to think differently about how to make pictures and what to include in them.

I am interested in several themes, particularly the idea of how people who live in and around ancient architecture are affected by or benefit from same, how individuals impact the environment they live in, and the abstract qualities of light. I have had ample opportunity to take photographs while traveling in the United States and abroad, exploring various subjects and themes, such as how much better life can be when one is surrounded by friendship, beauty, and the arts. I try to describe all this through images of buildings, cities and villages, objects and artwork.

I am fascinated by the ways in which creative people seek to make a place, a neighborhood, or a blank wall on a desolate street their own, either by self-empowered means, such as graffiti or festive holiday decoration, or by more traditional commercial methods, such as architecture, advertising, and urban planning.

Every place has its own character and distinct culture, but there are norms that one finds in places as disparate as Chicago, Madrid, Kansas City, Vienna, Miami. For myself, the great pleasure is the process of seeking these images out, making a pilgrimage to a place to discover how people live in an environment that I haven't yet experienced, and creating new images of those sights and sensations.

My interest in photography began when I was 12 or 13 and fascinated by trains. I would take pictures of trains, develop the film, and make prints in my father's (amateur) darkroom. My serious photographic work began when I apprenticed as a photographer's assistant during high school and learned the art and craft of still-life photography, which formed the basis of my career as a photographer of works of art, objects, and historic architecture. Once I had a good understanding of my craft, I left the commercial world and set out to do work that was more educational and art-focused. I have enjoyed the work immensely and feel privileged to be able to make a living with my camera.

Opposite: *Miami Murals Bicicleta Semifreio*





*Union Station Rail Yard and Man with Cane*



*Acme Bicycle Company*



*Viennese Street Cars with Passengers at Night*

The Mill Street Salon was founded in 2012 to provide a forum for photographers who are committed to long-term projects about which they are passionate. At monthly meetings, one or two carefully edited prints, presented by each photographer, are critiqued in an environment that is encouraging and supportive, but firm. Critiques focus on why an image was made, how it can make a stronger statement, how it supports the photographer's project, and the future direction of the project. The Mill Street photographers value the exchange of ideas and criticism; they also laugh a lot and enjoy each other's company.





## MILL STREET SALON

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