

Out Look

Photo contest winners hit us with their best shots

by Jaymee R. Cuti and Malka Geffen

Travel Category Winner

"Untitled" by Robert Richter

Travel category winner Robert B. Richter's life reads like a screenplay: Discontent food service worker flees Hollywood in search of a new beginning, documenting his life along the way. He has been a Portland since September.

This painter, who considers himself "career challenged," says digital photography, Photoshop and iPhoto have changed his approach to the art. He shoots with the eye of a traveler and a newcomer, often capturing landscapes. He also shoots color fields, plants, flowers and other artistic detail subjects.

This photo was shot shortly before leaving Los Angeles as part of an L.A. River series. Richter was moved by the "lonely looking" Route 66 sign that captured his feelings about the city.

"Route 66 was a historic route noted for its scenic beauty, and here we have this forlorn-looking sign being infringed upon by these very harsh elements," he said.

A Midwestern native, Richter remembers traveling the route on many family vacations as a child.

Photography is the art of isolation, according to Richter. A close-up of a flower or a well-composed look at a dingy downtown neighborhood help fill a scene with wonder.

"Both wonder at something in a questioning way and wonder at how amazing things are. The world is an amazing place," said Richter.

He also has a painterly approach to his shooting, probably because of his bachelor of fine arts degree from Otis College of Art and Design.

"I'm sure that's a big part of the reason I love digital photography combined with digital photo editing programs," he said. "I've recently ceased worrying about whether the shot looks 'true to life' and now just massage it to look the way it does in my mind—similar to my approach in painting."

Richter can be reached at rbrichterart@comcast.net.



Pets Category Winner

"Shifty Eyed Dog" by Rosanna Tam

Mission impossible: Ask a bunch of *Just Out* staffers to pick the best pet photo in a contest. A wet dog at the beach, a sleeping cat, a puppy playing with children. These are the images we had to contend with. In the end, this shifty-eyed dog stole our hearts.

The image is of photographer Rosanna Tam's 7-year-old Akita mix named Fuji (like the film). "He was just sitting there looking at my friend," said Tam. "He's kind of neurotic, so he's very expressive."

A queer barista at Haven Coffee, Tam said it's hard to be away from her dog. "I took the photo a year and a half ago in San Diego, where Fuji still lives," she said. "But I get to visit him whenever I'm home."

Tam began taking pictures after graduating from high school six years ago. "I'm obsessed with it, with finding angles," she said. "It's how I remember things."

With her camera at the ready, Tam said she takes pictures of everything—people, bands, pets, etc. "I always have my camera with me," said Tam, who had an art show at Haven Coffee in January.

Tam will have an art show in July at Matchbox Lounge, 3203 S.E. Division St. You can also see more of her work at www.rosnaps.com.

Abstract Category Winner

"Rust" by Nisa Haron

Abstract category winner Nisa Haron confesses, "Burnt orange is my favorite color, and I'm a texture whore."

She took a photo of this Buick parked on Southeast 28th Avenue and Division Street for those reasons.

A glass artist who has begun experimenting with Polaroid emulsion transfer technique, Haron makes documenting society a common practice in her life. "I shoot a lot of social documentary, what's going on in this crazy world," she said.

Haron and her partner, Cathy Owen, run The Studio, where they make functional kiln-formed glass. They have donated pieces to charitable auctions for organizations including Basic Rights Oregon and Equity Foundation.

Originally from Malaysia, Haron has a special interest in American automobiles, from their look to the politics of their industry.

"I'm interested in the automobile industry, from the American to the Asian market. It's kind of sad that it's gone that way. I don't know why people are not making those really gorgeous cars. I wish they'd make a comeback," she said.

Though Haron does not own a muscle car herself, she can be seen riding her vintage Schwinn American Flyer through her Sellwood neighborhood. Her work will be displayed in November at Utopia Cafe, 3308 S.E. Belmont St.

