

spring, “Summer of Letters,” which featured images of golf courses?

DF: I’m represented by the Imogen Gallery in Astoria. I have an exhibition there every two years, which is a common artist schedule. It takes time to develop all that. And so I was like, “OK, well, what am I going to do in 2020?” This was in 2018 and unbeknownst that there was going to be a pandemic and global crisis.

I started focusing on golf because I’m a golfer. I have several golfing-type clients from golf courses. And I had this whole philosophy about what it means to golf — and (what it means) to walk a golf course. So I just had this whole plethora of imagery and photography of golf courses from all around the world.

CW: What was it like to have your show opening during the pandemic?

As artists, we spend two years or however long in our lifetime working on that stuff. And so there’s supposed to be this art walk coming through the gallery. That did not happen. The show was there — but there were no people. So that was a little challenging to deal with. But I’ve said before — those are first world problems. I mean, there are much bigger issues than an empty art gallery ... I just want people to be able to see it for whatever it is. I just think artists need to be truly celebrated as they are trying to figure out the work that is going to come out of this year.

CW: Was this a venture from the work you typically pursued?

DF: I used photographs, but this time I wound up scratching sayings (into them) from movies, famous golfers ... I tried to fit those in with the images to try and personalize them instead of just being photos. But in this process, I discovered this sculptural element using what I call the detritus of the game, which are things that people use one time and then throw away like a pencil and other elements like that. And so I started collecting these items for like two years until I had enough actually to work with. This was a great opportunity to push my creative elements. As an artist, that is important to me — to do different things. A lot of the artists in this area that I really respect and know personally — that’s how I think they approach it. I’m just trying to keep up with those people. And that’s how the show became the “Summer of Letters.”

CW: What personally drew you to take photos related to golf? What would you like people to take away from your exhibition?

DF: My personal relationship with golf is about exercise but it’s also kind of a philosophy. It’s a challenge of how to over-

come emotions and to celebrate the small victories — not get dismayed by the small failures. I think that I find many similarities between the philosophy of golf and the philosophy of life. It may not be for everybody ... I mean, if you do something you love, then you never work a day in your life.

CW: How has the geography and environmental features of the Oregon coast inspired your photos in the exhibition?

DF: The golf course that I golf at in Gearhart is the oldest golf course on this side of the Mississippi River, which is pretty cool. The way it’s laid out is very natural. But another thing that’s really important to me is environmentalism. It is something I’ve been an advocate for a long time. And so as far as the Oregon Coast goes, I mean, I think it’s one of the most beautiful places. The access that people have to the beaches ... And I think Oregon itself just has this kind of great ethos about it that it’s pretty mellow. People appreciate the smaller things. It’s not fancy out here but it’s got some real soul to it. When I moved out here almost 20 years ago, it was a little challenging to meet people and stay busy. But I quickly found my people and things to do to keep me busy in the environment and in nature. I love it. I just love it. I don’t know where else to go.

CW: Do you have any current projects in the works, outside of your commercial photography and exhibitions?

DF: Lately, I have been trying to figure out how to document the pandemic. I just recently started documenting these restaurants that keep closing ... (I am) trying to document what these specific type of businesses are dealing with ... I’ve been poking my nose into restaurants like, “Hi, I’m Don Frank.”

CW: What feedback did you get from these community members?

DF: I’ve been getting a lot of really great feedback exactly along those lines like “Thank you for doing this” but I’ve also gotten an earful all up and down the gamut ... I don’t have a position on it. As a photographer, I’m there to just document it. But it has actually been really eye opening for me to get their point of view cause these are their livelihoods, you know, and I really feel for them. It’s like you’re like documenting history. We’re living in history right now.

CW: What is your advice for artists?

DF: Well, I think the first thing for any artist is just to keep working. That’s the most important thing and develop their ideas. I developed my ideas because the skills come with time. I mean, some peo-



A photo taken by Don Frank of a baby with a sandy foot.

ple are better than others, or whatever, but everybody’s trying to rise up and become the best artist they can be.

And that takes time. It takes effort and dedication, for sure. I know a lot of art-

ists are nervous about showing their stuff because art is an expression of ourselves. And I understand that. I think that, at some point, you have to get over that and put yourself out there.