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Reflected Waves

Vern DiPietro's dramatic photographs of the ocean gain regional exposure

BY JACK DAVIS
Siuslaw News

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Local photographer Vern DiPietro photographs Pacific Ocean waves as part of "Reflections," showing at Blue Sky Gallery in Portland, Ore. Here, he focuses his camera at Sea Lion Caves on Highway 101 near Florence.



PHOTOS BY VERN DIPIETRO

Florence-area photographer Vern DiPietro has been chosen to show his work at the prestigious Pacific Northwest Photography Viewing Drawers event being held now through March 31, 2017, at Blue Sky Gallery in Portland. He is one of only 68 regional Northwest photographers chosen for the show.

DiPietro, 58, has been working on a series of reflected wave photographs for the past six years. Blue Sky Gallery juror Katherine Ware, the curator of photography at New Mexico Museum of Art in Santa Fe, selected his series titled "Reflections."

"Reflections" is the distillation of approximately 40,000 wave images shot by DiPietro.

This will be DiPietro's first major show.

Growing up in Portland, DiPietro became fascinated with photography from an early age.

"There was a professional photographer that lived about a half-block away from our house. I was doing odd jobs for her and she would take me around to gallery openings. I met a lot of interesting people and got interested in photography," DiPietro explained.

In 1971, when he was 13, he saved his money and bought a Nikkormat camera body for \$225 and a 15-mm lens for \$200.

"My dad flipped out over the price, but that got me rolling," DiPietro said. "Then all my money went into film and processing."

"It's not like today when you can buy a good little camera and just shoot and shoot and shoot until you get better," he added.

DiPietro moved to Florence the first time in the early 1980s as a member of U.S. Coast Guard Station Siuslaw River. He was an engineer at the time, but wanted to drive boats.

"I made surfman before I left Florence," DiPietro said. "Surfman is a Coast Guard designation for an enlist-

DiPietro chose from over 40,000 photographs of waves for his "Reflections" collection.

ed coxswain to operate surfboats, like the ones at Station Siuslaw River, in heavy surf. I actually saved a couple of lives while here in Florence."

One of the things DiPietro learned while training to be a surfman was to watch out for reflected waves; waves that crash into rocky headlands and the energy is reflected back out to sea. When conditions are right, the reflected wave collides with an incoming wave to create a dramatic explosion of opposing forces.

"The area around Sea Lion Caves is a nightmare in a boat because of the reflected waves," DiPietro said. "If you are pointed out to sea, you are looking at the waves coming in, but you have to be aware that something is also going to come and bite you from behind."

His fascination with reflected wave patterns grew out of his time in the Coast Guard. He now puts that ability to good use in his photography.

DiPietro retired from the Coast Guard and moved back to Florence in 1987.

"I've applied before to this show and others," DiPietro said. "It's like any art form; you get a lot of buzzers (rejections). I've been really frustrated. I applied to a show in Colorado. The theme was water. I thought, 'I am so



in.' But I didn't make it."

His favorite spot to catch reflected waves is at Sea Lion Caves, north of Florence at Heceta Head.

"Today, everybody is a photographer and it is very hard to break in," DiPietro said. "That is what makes this show so exciting. It is a huge deal."

DiPietro does not have his work exhibited in any local galleries. He sells most of his photography from his website, www.VernonDiPietroPhotographer.com.

All of DiPietro's prints at Blue Sky Gallery, at 22 NW Eighth Ave., Portland, in the historic DeSoto Building, are matted to 16-inch by 20-



inch. The gallery is open noon to 5 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday.

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