
5 Minutes with a ViewPoint Member

An Interview with Ford Doolittle

by Angela Creaser, October 2015

Angela: When and how did you start photography?

Ford: *I started photography in 1987 when I separated from my first wife. A guy named Ben McCall, a local photographer that most people don't seem to remember, gave me a camera and I started shooting in black and white. Before that I had an old [Spotmatic](#) camera from my father, but I hadn't done any real photography at that time.*

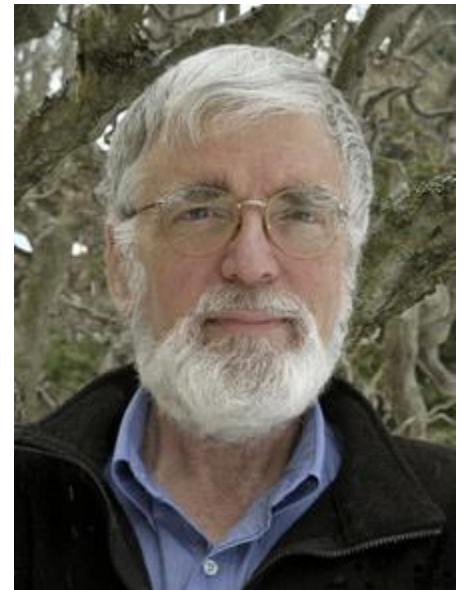
Angela: You went to [NSCAD](#) for 16 years – part-time. How did NSCAD change your photography?

Ford: *I think it changed my photography, but I am certainly still interested in the same mundane subject matter that I was interested in before I started at NSCAD. I actually wanted to be a painter when I started there. My father was a painter and he was also a professor at the [University of Illinois](#). Going to NSCAD showed me that I wasn't as good a painter as I wanted to be, and I wasn't prepared to spend the time to develop the skills that in my mind a painter needs to have. So, photography seemed to take less skill, or more immediately connected me with what I wanted to do; then I really started to enjoy the photography process at the same time.*

Angela: Your work seems to be more about the process of making the picture than the subject which you are photographing. Can you comment on this?

Ford: *I have a practice, and the practice is shooting pictures. I don't do a lot of post processing which I know a lot of ViewPoint members do – they seem to spend time agonizing over how to represent an image where I'd rather just shoot more pictures. I think there is a particular thing I am looking for which I can't describe in words, but it's a certain attitude or subject matter that I seem to like. I have been influenced by [William Eggleston](#), an early colour photographer, and someone most people don't seem to know much about these days, [John Gossage](#), whose work I seem to be trying to channel. Both of these photographers' style is to walk down the street taking pictures of a little piece of garbage, a corner of a building, someone's foot, or any strange thing that strikes them as visually interesting or provocative, and that's what I try to do.*

Angela: Is there one image that you've taken recently that represents this for you?



Ford: Yes, there are a few that exemplify my interest in totally mundane subject matter. I like to go to places and spend the morning taking pictures, usually somewhere where I can find a good lunch afterwards. I've gone almost every year to the Windsor County Exhibition where there is lots of cool stuff to photograph like animals, ox pulls, price winning pies and stuff like that. Two images that stick out for me include one of a corner of a building where the exhibition was held and the other a stack of orange plastic chairs which strikes me as interesting. I'm interested in things that other people might find boring.

Angela: You have a strong preference for vertical images? What do you think is at the root of your fear of horizontal compositions?

Ford: I wouldn't say I fear horizontal, but it is true that I lean towards vertical. I am fussy with how things are matted, I believe a matt should be bigger at the bottom than the top, and believe that what some people do is cheating – creating matts that are the same all around so they can change the photograph out and make it vertical or horizontal. Most of the matts I bought are meant for vertical, so I tend to shoot vertical. But I also prefer verticals because for me it gives more attention to the object and in some ways makes the image a little more special, where a horizontal feels more like anyone can take the picture.



Angela: How do you think being an award winning, [world renowned geneticist](#) has impacted your photography?



Ford: Not at all, although, I am interested a bit in the same sorts of things. In my science I'm really interested in the particular, trying to get away from metatheory or debunk metatheories, so I think in some ways my photography is a bit like that as I get quite excited about the details. There is a connection there but not a really strong one.

Angela: You had two solo exhibitions at ViewPoint, "Closer to Home" in 2012 and then "Farther/Further Afield" earlier this year, what are you working on now?

Ford: Something along the same lines, but I'd like to get more things in my pictures. I tend to focus on unitary objects, and I think I have a good sense of composition, and sometimes my photos look like paintings – not sure why that is. But I'd like to have compositions with more things in them. I am still going to wander around and take pictures. The fun of photography is to wander around and say "oh my God, look at that", and then take a picture. I'm focusing between Oxford, Coburg, Robie, and Quinpool – there is lots of interesting stuff in around there.

Angela: We have time for five quick questions.

Favorite dessert? *Crème Brule*
Left or Right? *Left*
Drive or Fly? *Drive*
Favorite singer? *I don't have one - Bob Dylan I suppose*
Guilty pleasure? *Chai latte*

For more information about Ford Doolittle, please visit [Ford's page](#) on the ViewPoint website.