
5 Minutes with a ViewPoint Member

An Interview with Carl Snyder

by Angela Creaser, December 2015

Angela: Can you describe how and when you became interested in photography?

Carl: Like a lot of people, my interest started at a young age. I had a darkroom during high school, and who inspired me initially was my father. He became a photography buff after the Second World War and I remember sitting with my family watching his slides. When I realized you could take pictures on film and develop it yourself and make prints, my interest peaked. I did a lot of reading on photography. By grade eleven I had saved enough to buy an enlarger and an inexpensive 35mm film camera. I think I spent in total \$120, which was probably a considerable sum back then as this was in the 60's. I became interested on my own, but also found fellow students who were interested in photography because of the work they did for high school publications. I became involved at school, using their darkroom, photographing school events for the year book and the literary magazine.



Angela: I know you use digital cameras now, how long did you photograph with film?

Carl: I used film exclusively for at least 30 years... I started with film when I was 17. During university, I worked summers at a newspaper, the [London Free Press](#) in London, Ontario, working almost exclusively in the darkroom. Eventually they had me out on the street looking for enterprise shots (looking for interesting stories and taking a photograph to go along with it). That was in the mid 70's. By the early 80's I was working in an advertising photo studio in Montreal. I shot film up until digital first started creeping into the commercial world I was working in, about 1995. I still photograph with film occasionally, but since about 2003 when I purchased my first digital SLR my work is almost all digital.

Angela: Do you find your creativity changes when photographing with film versus digital?

Carl: I do. I've discussed this with older photographers who have had lots of film experience in the past. The one thing that thrilled me about digital was the accurate colour reproduction that you could do on your own. Prior to that I was working in a studio environment where I shot large



format transparency film. My portfolio was full of 8x10 and 11x14 E-6 transparencies – beautiful colour. But when I tried making colour prints - [C prints](#), [dye transfer](#), [Cibachrome](#) - none of them worked. They were either too expensive, the colours weren't accurate, and/or I didn't have the expertise required to realize what I wanted to do. Digital made colour possible for me. So far I'm not as happy with digital black and white as I am with film black and white. But it was really the accessibility of colour that swayed me to digital.

Angela: Where there any major challenges to making that switch.

Carl: Aside from learning the software (!) there weren't any major challenges, but initially earlier digital cameras didn't generate files large enough to make anything other than 8x10 prints; you would get lots of banding. After sensors became more refined, and [Epson](#) introduced more refined ink jet printers, I found that the technical challenges weren't as difficult. The limitation I ran into that annoyed me the most was the print size with the earlier technology.

Angela: Do you have a favourite subject or theme that you like to photograph?

Carl: Landscapes almost exclusively. I'm not a people photographer at all. I like long horizontal panoramas that are like a narrative.



Angela: Is there one image that you took that really stands out for you, that represents your style?

Carl: Yes, my image of the Gaspereau River at Horton Landing is a good example. I just recently, thanks to [Eric Boutilier-Brown](#), learned how to stitch large files together. This is a new revelation to me. I took a class last May, and I've taken quite a few photographs since then. I live in [Wolfville](#), so I have easy access to the [Minas Basin](#), the [Gaspereau River](#), [North Mountain](#), [South Mountain](#), Wolfville Harbour. I stitch maybe 8 or 10 files together for one image.

Angela: It's addictive isn't it?

Carl: Yes, it is absolutely addictive. It allows me to assemble images that reflect the large scale sense of the abstract I see in the natural world around us. It's a favorite pastime, thinking of colour and shape, and there is lots of that here. But printing limitations are back! My printer can only print 13 x 44 inches. The landscapes I'm working on are ones I'd like to print at 17 x 115 inches. So my earlier 8x10 limitation of early digital technology has become my four foot limitation. What I have to do is find another printer.

Angela: So that is what you are working on now, your main focus?

Carl: Yes, working on large format panoramas. That will be the focus of my next exhibition. It's not just landscapes, its panoramic seeing. I have been shooting panoramas in the studio as well (still life). I like using the sweep from left to right, similar to ones style of reading, so that the picture becomes a narrative. My favourite photographs are ones that you can look at for a very long period of time, and that you can come back to and look at them again for a long period of time. I think large horizontal panoramas of any kind make that possible.

Angela: We have time for five more quick questions. What is your...

Favorite colour?	Blue
Favorite book?	As I Lay Dying by William Faulkner
Favorite pastime? (other than photography)	Walking my dogs
Favorite meal of the day?	Dinner
Favorite number?	9