





PHOTOGRAPHER EVERITT CLARK

Layers Upon Layers

THE DICHOTOMY OF OLD AND NEW | BY NATALIA MEGAS



Everitt Clark

It took photographer Everitt Clark time to find his true talent, but after years of searching, the Alexandria resident finally found his niche.

"When I was growing up, I wasn't really involved in the arts. I was a bit of a science nerd," says the D.C. native. However, he wrote musical compositions for a friend's video game during high school, and music became his passion.

Everitt earned his A.B. degree in music from Princeton University and took time off to travel in Europe following the death of his father.

The two-year trip was a time of introspection for Everitt, and he realized that music composition was no longer satisfying to him. "I didn't feel like I was good

enough at it to devote the rest of my life to it." During his travels, he spent a month in Italy, studying "the art of all ages." It was only later that Everitt realized that his immersion in art informed his photography. "My art studies prepared the groundwork for becoming a photographer," he says.

When a high school friend offered to teach him large-format black-and-white photography, Everitt said yes and never looked back. And though he returned to Princeton to complete his degree in music, photography was his new path.

With its maximum detail and enhanced intensity, density and tonality, large-format photography was appealing to Everitt. Unlike the "already interpreted"



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photographs produced by digital cameras, his four-by-five-inch negatives create images that offer a sense of immediacy. "What you see is what you get," says Everitt.

The fact that he can only carry so many heavy negatives with him during a shoot is a good thing, says Everitt. "It forces you to slow down and think about every shot," he says. Despite his medium's roots in the past, Everitt appreciates the possibilities: "I feel like black-and-white photography still has a lot to say."

During his post-production process, Everitt experiments with exposing parts of a contact print with different levels of light, a technique he calls "dodging and burning." After bleaching the print to increase contrast and emphasis, he immerses the image in selenium toner for tone and warmth and dry mounts it to remove imperfections.

The dichotomy of old and new is a recurring theme in Everitt's photographic compositions, and his portfolio includes humble scenes like interiors of houses or exterior shots of the suburbs.

One of Everitt's current inspirations is landscape painter John Constable, who once said he'd never seen anything ugly in his life: "I think I have a similar attitude in that I look for subject matter that you wouldn't typically associate with this kind of camera, bringing that classical way of looking at it to unexpected subject matter. You don't have to go out to Yosemite or Yellowstone to see nature. All you have to do is open your eyes and pay attention."



Everitt's latest series, *Cities in the Air*, is a compilation of photographs from Belle Isle in Richmond, Virginia. Intrigued by remnants of the past, he sought out places like the notorious Civil War prisoner-of-war camp, a deserted factory and warehouses. The notion of capturing things made up of multiple layers was especially appealing to Everitt.

"Richmond was a many-layered place with all these different strata of time periods and kinds of human structures," he says.

"Ruined Bridge Pillar" from the series depicts part of the bridge structure in the James River. When Everitt happened upon it, he was unable to resist the beauty of sunlight shimmering next to it. "There was this sense



Page 44: "Mirror"

Page 45: "Leaf on a Photograph of Old Richmond, Belle Isle"

Opposite, top: "Ruined Bridge Pillar, James River"; and "Cloud Over Richmond"

Above: "Abandoned Hydroelectric Plant, Belle Isle"

All are photographs.

of two very disparate things brought together through a composition in one picture," he says.

Everitt's goal is to create something "that is more like a story that can draw people in." For example, the silver gelatin print, "Abandoned Hydroelectric Plant," conjures up an array of intriguing narratives with its graffiti quote, "RATHER HERE THAN HOME."

"When I take a picture of a rundown building," says Everitt, "it's not just a sign of economic decay and human suffering. That's certainly true, but I'd much rather capture the aspect of it. What is beautiful about this way of life, even if it's tough? What is there that can be salvaged using the tools of classical landscape photography that lets you have this credible devotion to detail?"

Everitt cites "Leaf on a Photograph of Old Richmond" as his favorite image from the collection, in part because of its many layers. "I did not set out to make that image," he says.

The photograph came about simply because a wet leaf fell on a historic photo of Richmond. The sunlight that was streaming through added a crucial dimen-

sion: "Here I had a landscape and a natural detail from the present day and the light on top of it unifying everything—it was just a gift."

Everitt believes that photography has allowed him to take command of his environment and to uncover the layers of his past. But "there's always the challenge of self-criticism," he cautions.

"You feel like you can always do better. That's valuable; it's part of the process.... Beating yourself up is not good, but being tough on yourself the way you would want to look at yourself 100 years from now is."

Everitt recommends that aspiring photographers "look at a lot of things in the world but look outside of photography as well. Look and listen. Let music inform your photography. Let painting, sculpture and dance and many other things come into it.... Look, think, read, listen widely and then let that inform whatever it is you do as a photographer."

Cities in the Air is on view this month at Hillyer Art Space in Washington, D.C. (see Calendar). é

Everitt Clark | www.everittclarkphotography.com