

Bret Culp has photographic exhibition at Gallery 888 in Toronto

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Bret Culp, Dunnville native, has photographic exhibition in Toronto's Gallery 888.

By Anna Sand

Any fan of photography should certainly keep their eyes open for new, Canadian photographic talent Bret Culp.

Immediately drawn to the work when she first saw it, Gallery 888 owner Elizabeth Russ became acquainted with Culp after a Silent Auction for the Canadian Film Centre, for which her gallery donated time. Culp's employer, Bob Munroe (C.O.R.E. digital pictures), funded a week's exhibition at the gallery for Culp and, after discussions with Russ, the decision was made to extend the show to two weeks. The result, Gallery 888 in Toronto is about to host an exhibition of the Dunnville native's photographic work this October.

The show, titled 'Lost and Found', is a series of Culp's landscape works from across Canada. The shots are mainly black and white, although some striking and surprising colours have been seen in previews.

Beginning with photos from 35mm and medium format negatives and slide film, Culp completes all of his own darkroom work using a computer and output to photographic paper using a laser-recording device. The output format is important to his work he says, as 'the result is a gallery quality continuous tone archival true photographic print that will not start to fade, even in direct sunlight, for eighty plus years.'

Of Culp's work, Russ describes it as an 'emotive landscape style'. 'It's thought provoking, and not your typical spray of still life flowers.'

His landscape photos are reminiscent of the late Ansel Adams in their ability to capture the beauty of nature. Culp is much more modest about his own work, saying Ansel Adam's work is the 'Holy Grail of landscape photography... his ability to capture and print landscape is unmatched and sheer genius'. Culp says that Ansel Adam's work was also often a very specific representation of what he photographed, as opposed to the more abstract visual that Culp often frames.

Culp has already begun to make a name for himself in the film industry. The 31 year old is already the visual effects director and supervisor at C.O.R.E. digital pictures (one of Canada's largest visual effects studios, who have worked on such films as the upcoming Lucy Lui film Cypher and X-Men).

The Dunnville native recalls considering working in special effects and directing in high school and thought initially, "Well, who does that?". After some consideration, he realized 'well, someone has to do it and why not me'.

It obviously comes naturally. Taking photographs on his own since he was a teenager, Culp studied film and television at Ryerson and after his graduation progressed quickly in his field, with an in depth knowledge of the business from animation to supervising shoots for major motion films. He's quite decided regarding a move into further directing in the future.

His friends describe him as very real and genuine, which likely contributes to his ease of working with big names in the motion picture industry. Canadian artist Maria Gorden describes Culp as an 'extremely talented individual with a good heart.' It's no wonder he's in demand to work with.

Of his own photographic work, as Russ implies, he's quite modest. Culp merely says it's a different thing working behind a still camera and working for motion pictures. 'On set I'm part of a large group of people each of whom uses highly specialized skills to contribute to one end product... because of the number of individuals required in film work, it tends to be slow going.' In contrast, 'that part of landscape that might be still and quiet is still spontaneous. It's all me and very instinctive.'

Culp has subtitled the show "Look and you will find it - what goes unsought will go undetected." - Sophocles. This theme is carried throughout the show, coupling photographs of spectacular scenery along with quotations, from Emerson and D.H. Lawrence to native Indian Crowfoot.

Examining some quotations Culp uses in the show, 'Any landscape is composed not only of what lies before our eyes, but what lies in our heads.' (D.W. Meinig) and 'We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are.' (Anais Nin), there's certainly a lot to look forward to from Culp's future work.

Future plans already include an exhibition of photographs of musicians, dignitaries, etc. from the recent international 'War Child Canada' gala held in Winnipeg this September, again showing Culp's complex capabilities with his work. Was Culp there to photograph the event? It turns out, no. 'Photographing the event was something that couldn't help but happen when I was there.' Culp art directed the acclaimed Musicians In The War Zone documentary for Warchild Canada, which is the highest rated show ever aired on Much Music.

The show is expected to draw a number of individuals from the multi-media industry, including film and television, who are already familiar with Culp's on camera work.

'Lost and Found' runs from October 2nd-14th at Gallery 888 in Toronto. The opening reception for takes place Thursday, October 4th between 6-10 pm. The gallery is located at 888 Queen Street East in Toronto, making it easily accessible by public transit for those who wish to see the show.

For further information about the gallery and the show, you can check out their web site at www.gallery888.com, or you can call the gallery at 416-462-9930.

You can also check out Bret Culp Imagery at www.bretculp.com for some of his photographic work and the Internet Movie Database, www.imdb.com, for a list of some of Culp's most prominent film work.