

John Ricca

Within The Absolute Beyond

June 20 – July 19, 2014
Olive Hyde Art Gallery, Fremont, CA

*“If the doors of perception were cleansed
every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite.”*

William Blake

*“The only real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes,
but in having new eyes.”*

Marcel Proust

John Ricca has been practicing photography for over 50 years. He is a master technician who has spent most of those years mining for the optimal image in the expansive landscape of the West, striving to see the world on a larger scale. Recently, abstraction has risen to the forefront. He says, “I don’t see trees anymore, I see fractals.” *Within The Absolute Beyond* shows the viewer this profound shift in understanding. Ricca creates the subtle changing of an expansive oceanscape by utilizing a long exposure, resulting in a field of color bands, bringing the viewer face to face with the power of infinite space. He is able to do this again and again in a variety of ways, such as in the repeating patterns found in *Brick Kiln* or the graceful curving forms found in a small patch of ice, as seen in *Ice 21*. He is telling us that the entire world is open to the exploration of the infinite.

Technique is an important factor in any artist’s tool bag. Ricca is able to access the appropriate technique to allow the art to rise to the surface. Herein lies the confidence of a master and the answer to why any of his photography is not just simply a snapshot. For instance, in *Canal Side* Ricca employs a specific camera shake and pan to create a fluid, water-like effect where objects are recognizable (trees, a boat, bicycles and buildings) but resonate a hidden quality, too. It is as if we are privy to a singular moment where he stood witness to visible sound waves and their effect in the cityscape. He speaks of the necessity to learn the rules of the art form first and then to go about breaking them; pushing the medium is akin to the internal inquiry of the artist and *Within The Absolute Beyond*, guides us through John Ricca’s current exploration in pushing the influences of other art forms (e.g., impressionism, pen and ink drawings, watercolor, and abstract expressionism) upon photography.

A series of abstract photographs is never what they might seem. While a photograph is an image, and any given viewer could consider it’s objectness and judge it’s aesthetic merits; even still, it is more. A photograph is always a record marking a moment in time. This gives photography a specific complexity. Other art forms certainly have their own complexity, but this relationship with time is particular to photography. The photograph’s marking of time allows it to speak for that point in space and time forever. It’s beguiling. It draws you in, and, ultimately, it connects you to the artist. For it engages your mind, emotions, and spirit just as the subject engaged the photographer to freeze time for a fraction of a second. Consider *Pacific Grove Abstract 9*, a piece that is achingly beautiful with its movement of dots in the foreground melting into a blue depth. There is an acceptance of the ephemerality of a moment, as well as, the “thing”, i.e. the sea. Here we have the merging of abstract time, experience, and physical object; applying the Buddhist principle “we are all one.”

For Ricca, the former objects such as trees and mountains have become less important. What is significant now is the influence of these various objects. It’s interesting to note the definition of influence: the capacity or power of a thing (object) to be a compelling force on or produce effects on the actions, behavior, opinions, etc., of others. Ricca, in showing his work, provides a window into your soul, to make the connection between the object and your essential nature, your joy, your beauty. This is a very human and humane pursuit. In attending to his own spirit, he captures a perfect moment, and then, utilizing an equally playful sensibility and deeply skilled technique, he merges himself in the final image and shares it with the viewer.

John Ricca is a gracious inheritor of what forefather of photography, Alfred Stieglitz, said, “I have always been a great believer in *today*. Most people live either in the past or in the future, so that they really never live at all. So many people are busy worrying about the future of art or society, they have no time to preserve what *is*. Utopia is in the moment. Not in some future time, some other place, but in the here and now, or else it is nowhere.” How fortuitous, then, it is for us to be granted a view into this artist’s moments of being present.

Lisa Carroll, Curator