Young Sycamore Seed

Eaten Leaf II

George Holzer in his studio with his dog Dolly.
Photo by Greg VandeVisser

# George Holzer

### The beauty of imperfection.
*Interview by David Grafton*

**SL: How did you become involved with photography?**

**GH**: In college, after trying various mediums, (drawing, painting, sculpture, & printmaking), I decided I wanted to incorporate photo imagery into my work. I therefore took a photography course and found a new home in a department much more open, accepting, and flexible (mixed media, experimental materials, alternative process exploration). I ended up becoming a photo major.

**SL: What did you do while in Florida?**

**GH:** From 1981-1982 I was an Artist in Residence through Tampa Museum outreach program. And from 1982-1990, I was with Graphicstudio at the University of South Florida, an experimental print and sculpture atelier collaborating with artists: Rauschenberg, Lichtenstein, Dine, Rosenquist, Close, Mapplethorp, Pearlstein, Chia, Graves, & others.

My first project there was a "jump in with both feet" affair in 1982. I was asked to produce a continuous 100 foot-long color photographic print for Rauschenberg using photos taken during his recent trip to China. This was for a show at the Castelli Gallery in New York.

**SL: How did you end up on the shore?**

**GH:** In 1991, I moved here to work with Donald Saff at Saff Tech Arts in Oxford. A new company formed here to continue working in more exotic and experimental ways with several of the artists we had worked with at Graphicstudio, but no longer for a University. Primarily did projects with Rauschenberg, Lichtenstein, Graves and Turrell. Also, potential project experiments were done with a number of artists: Dine Rosenquist, Johns, Stella, Sultan, Close, & Smith.

**SL: How would you explain your current work?**

**GH:** I love the natural world and have always been drawn to nature's beauty. Not just, "Oh that's a beautiful scene. I want to memorialize it". It may be beautiful and worthy of a memorial, but I'm not really interested in making botanical portraits or pretty pictures of a bud or leaf seen in its nanosecond of perfection.

What excites me is the unexpected, the wear and tear of nature. I love finding something in the process of transforming. It's a form of wildness that I find energizing and intriguing.

And that's really closely tied in with another aspect of nature - well all of life really - that I find infinitely intriguing: found objects in various stages of decline and distortion. Maybe it's the wildness again, the unplanned"ness" of them. They catch my eye.

I find some discarded and declining objects extremely beautiful. I'm drawn to the path the object takes as it moves from perfection into and through decline. "The bloom is off the rose," and I like that. Sometimes things past their prime possess a unique beauty. They're separated from the pack by their battle scars. I want to showcase that decline by not only acknowledging the imperfections and processes, but by adoring them. So I bring them home and into the studio to be put under the "glamour lights". Once they're memorialized they can be examined and contemplated at leisure.

On another level, somewhere in there is the image as a metaphor. The works don't demand you spot a reference to bigger subjects, concepts, or possible meanings, but those elements are there.

Last, what I find most interesting and engaging about the activity of art-making is the ability it has to show me, usually much later than I might like, what might have been going on for me at a sub-conscience level while I was working on a piece. I understand something that might have been under the surface yet driving me at the time. It just emerges in the work without my concious effort. A little like therapy but a lot cheaper than $170 an hour. It just takes a little longer.

George Holzer is to photography what Alan Magee is to painting. Magee became known for his paintings of stones in Maine. If a stone has but one heartbeat in a lifetime , what does a dried leaf or a broken stick have? George Holzer knows, and we should all be glad for that. **SL**