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Pam Rosenblatt

Andrea Buzzichelli and her fascinating toy camera images

The third annual Somerville Toy Camera Festival took place from September 10, 2015 through September 27, 2015 with over 94 artists and 122 artworks showing in three different art venues: Nave Gallery, Nave Annex, and Washington Street Gallery. An international exhibition, the exhibit contained toy camera images from artists as local as Somerville and as distant as England and Italy. A multitude of camera-friendly practices and cameras were present and made the exhibition truly worth its visitors' time, Nave Galleries Director Susan Berstler informed **Wilderness House Literary Review's** arts editor Pam Rosenblatt through a series of emails. Berstler is also part of the Somerville Toy Camera Festival Organizing Committee.



Rosenblatt connected by email with one Italian toy camera photographer named Andrea Buzzichelli. She lives in Tuscany, Italy with her family and truly enjoys working with toy cameras to achieve "rather by chance" images on film. An informative emailed interview about Buzzichelli and her fascinating analog photography resulted from Rosenblatt's correspondences with Buzzichelli and may be read in the following online pages:



WHLR: What is your name? And how would you like your name to be written in the *Wilderness House Literary Review* arts article?

AB: Andrea Buzzichelli

WHLR: Where do you live? How long have you lived there? And how did you become affiliated with the Nave Gallery arts community that is located in the Medford/Somerville, Massachusetts area?

AB: I live in the middle of Tuscany, Italy. I have known the Nave Gallery for several years because of the Somerville Toy Camera Festival.

WHLR: When did you first become involved with photography, including toy camera photography? What is your photographic training?

AB: I started taking pictures in the early 90s. I am self-taught. During those years I wasn't a "good photographer" nor was I capable of producing anything interesting. But I greatly enjoyed the magic of the darkroom, the smell of the chemicals, and the slow passage of time in that room illuminated by a single red light.

With the onset of digital photography everything became simpler and faster and this brought on a desire to do more photography. I experimented a great deal with a wide variety of techniques but after a couple of

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years I realized that I wanted to return to the slower process of analog. I began to shoot again with my Olympus OM1 and with a Diana and a Holga. The results fascinated me.

I found in the toy camera the material nature that had been lost to me with the digital. The planned or random errors yielded surprising affects. Since then, I have continued to shoot a great deal of film and I continue to do so to this day. While it may seem a contradiction, I have the digital revolution to thank for this.

WHLR: Do you create other forms of art? If yes, what types? Painting, sculpture, mixed media, etc.?

AB: I'm a photographer because I'm a bad painter and a terrible poet.

WHLR: Where do you get your photographic ideas from? I mean, how did you capture such scenes at "Tuscany tales, #1"; "Childhood (the boat)" and "lalloo (3) original"? All three of these photos seem so mystical, even misty. How did you set these scenes up? And did you use a toy camera for each one?

AB: Well, what spurs me on to make good images is never the result of calculated preparation, but rather by chance. When I am down or somehow in difficulty, I take my camera (and in these cases, it was always a toy camera) and go around the countryside, the woods, near my home. Often in the morning, around sunrise. This helps me to relax; it recharges me and, on occasion, I find myself faced with scenes of exceptional beauty. "Childhood", instead, was shot at the sea. The child in the image is my own son. At the time, it was my intention to create a portfolio of images of my children, whom I saw growing up "too fast." I then abandoned color and focused on black and white, from whence came this series. In any case, all of these images were shot with a disposable underwater camera.



I always try to capture the simple beauty of life, everything that appears to me delicate and at risk of extinction: small gestures of another time ("Tuscany tales, #1") or even dream images (like "lalloo (3) original") that somehow are already in our imagination.

WHLR: And did you photo shop the images? If you did photo shop them, why?

AB: The answer is *NO*, I never photo shop my film photography. So, *NO*, I don't think film photography and especially toy cam photography need to

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be photo shopped! I love the “materia” of the film shot as it is. I occasionally use Photoshop when working on my digital images.

WHLR: Have you sold any of your photographs?

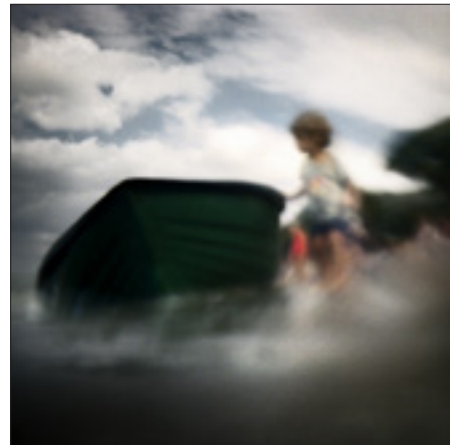
AB: Do I sell? Yes I sell some. It gives me great pleasure that my photographs are hung in apartments across the ocean and that they live a life of their own, far from me! Every time I sell an image, it moves me!

WHLR: Why use a toy camera over a “regular” camera? And what type of camera(s) and films and equipment in general did you use to create these photographs?

AB: In the past, I often used the Holga and various types of pinhole cameras. At present, I prefer an old 60s era Diana. It produces 4x4 images on 120 format film. As everyone who is familiar with these kinds of cameras knows, each one has its own unique character. The paucity of quality in their production, even the lenses themselves each have their own peculiarities which contribute to the character of what will be the final image. Each and every Holga is different from the next one. Of course the mood remains the same but one may produce a certain aberration in focus which is different from the next or take in light in a way that is uniquely its own. But there are some periods that I use professional film cameras .

WHLR: Who are your favorite artists, photographers or visual artists?

AB: When I am asked this question I never know how to respond. I see a lot of beautiful photography float in a sea of trash. There are many great artists but unfortunately few of them are well known and there is a plethora of well-known ones who, in my opinion, do not deserve the celebrity they have achieved. Personally, I have enormous respect for Arno Rafael Minkkinen (1945 -), Rinko Kawauchi (1972 -), Alec Soth (1969 -) ... and many others. I remember the images often, more than I do the names!



WHLR: Why do you create photographs that are so beautiful yet sometimes so dismal and sublime at the same time?

What messages are you trying to get across to your audience?

AB: In photography, like in life, I do not believe that I am conscious of everything I do. I do it, and that is it. It happens at times, though, at a distance of years, that I come to better understand the reason many of my images took shape the way that they did.

WHLR: How did you like the Somerville Toy Camera Festival 2015?

AB: Unfortunately I have never been at the show since I live in Italy. But they are doing a great job. Every year I can follow them from the web.

WHLR: Where do you see toy camera photography heading?

AB: The toy camera will survive as long as film survives. To shoot with

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a toy camera is to shoot from the gut, without thinking too much about technique or other things that distract the photographer from the subject. It also means to have a certain trust in chance, or in the value of surprise, which can also be beautiful (or...which can also produce a beauty you may not even have conceived of. And you can learn from this too.

WHLR: How would you direct aspiring photographers?

AB: My advice to young photographers is to stop buying outrageous cameras and lenses and to stop shooting millions of photos which they will probably never even manage to edit. To stop focusing solely on the technological aspects of photography, or using as a reference its old clichés; to be one's own self, perhaps beginning by shooting with toy cameras, which constitute the absolute renunciation of high-technology and speed. To look at what new, contemporary photographers are experimenting with and to see what new directions and possibilities today's constantly evolving photography holds.