



VISUAL ARTS

David Douglas at Dorothy Manning Gallery

BY DENA MILLER

DEVOTION TO THE CREATION of art finds its way into the soul from many directions. Some artists will say they knew with their first box of Crayolas that art was the path they were meant to follow. For photographer David Douglas, however, the development of his unerring eye came not so much as an epiphany but as an evolution over time and with the gift of travel.

This Thursday (June 16) Douglas will offer to the public a perspective of his journey when "Shuttering Experiences" premieres at the Dorothy Romo-Manning Studio and Gallery. An opening reception is scheduled for 4 to 6 p.m. with free admission for all and light refreshment offered. The exhibit will be available for viewing through Sunday (June 19) during the hours of 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

"After high school I went with my father, who taught at then-Oklahoma A&M, to Ethiopia where he was involved in the establishment of a college," Douglas recalled. "I kind of took over the Nikon camera he brought with him while I was doing my freshman year there."

After returning to the States and graduating college, Douglas went back to Ethiopia with the Peace Corps, accompanied, of course, by the Nikon. "After my service I moved to New York City where I worked in the administrative offices of the Corps and then met my wife, Karen."

By then the photography bug had bit him hard. "I bought rolls of film, cut it myself and rolled it into canisters, and Karen let me turn our bathroom



COURTESY PHOTO

'Continuation of Solace' by David Douglas

into a dark room." He roamed the streets with a keen eye trained upon the linear geometry of the urban architecture surrounding him. "I loved taking pictures in New York," he recalled, "immersing myself in its unique structural elements. Black and white photography was particularly well-suited to it."

Their move to New Mexico in 1988, however, gave the word "unique" a totally different context.

Douglas' expertise in I.T. had landed him a government job developing the then-infant New Mexico Workforce Solutions, covering the entire eastern half of the state with his Nikon as companion. The sweeping landscapes afforded little with which he could get his bearings: "Sometimes it was only a cloud in the sky that lent perspective to a horizon that stretched endlessly before me."

Yet, out of what he described as a time of "floundering" to acclimate to his new surroundings, Douglas built his most important collection of photographs to date.

The land's enormity and isolation captured him, as did the abandoned buildings and roadside relics of previous lives scattered across the landscape. His photograph, "Continuing Solace," is a classic example from this period, a stop in his travels with a surprising story tucked inside.

"I discovered the remote church held its last service in 1939, but it clearly has a spirit that still remains and gives comfort to visitors, hence, the title of the image," he noted. "Inside people left notes or cards, and one visitor had left bottles of water as an offering to those who might need it." It was striking to him that the church continued to arouse emotions and inspire people despite its forlorn desolation, which made it a compelling subject.

"I think that's the best part of photography. Any photo tells a story and leaves behind a record of humanity," Douglas mused, "and that's what I try to do. I hope my images transfer some of that feeling and gives the viewer something to think about in terms of their own emotional framework."

Since moving to Taos in 2006 Douglas has been active in the Taos Artist Organization, serving as a board member and drawing inspiration from its community of artists. Regardless of the medium in which others express themselves, "it's the collective of like minds that nurtures all art and encourages us to continue developing our craft."

Moving to Taos was coming full-circle in the journey for this award-winning photographer. His family had been coming from Oklahoma to Red River since the 1950s so his love of everything along the Enchanted Circle was well-established. And, naturally, a camera always accompanies him.

"Art is energy. I'll always have my fill as long as I can keep taking photographs."

The Dorothy Romo-Manning Studio and Gallery is located at 211 Cruz Alta Road in Taos. For further information please call (505) 263-4011, or visit shutteringexperiences.com.



COURTESY PHOTO

'An Illumination of Faith' by David Douglas