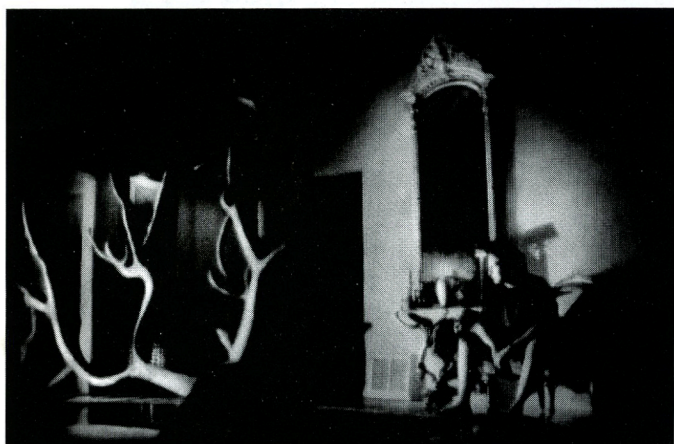


# ROCKY SCHENCK



**A**t the threshold between perception and imagination is where Rocky Schenck finds artistic inspiration for his mysterious, otherworldly pictures of landscapes and human environments. Working with a combination of highly refined on-camera filtration, masking and diffusion techniques along with surface manipulation of the print, he acknowledges striving to infuse a deeply psychological, dreamlike quality to his imagery.

"I consider my images to be illustrations of my conscious and unconscious dreams, emotions and longings," explains Schenck. "Many of the images explore positive and negative realities inhabiting dreamlike settings."

Born and raised on a ranch in Texas, Schenck began his artistic odyssey at the age of 12, studying oil painting. Influenced by what he describes as the "romantic" landscape paintings of his great-great grandfather and great-great uncle, both accomplished 19th-century painters who moved to Texas from Germany in 1851,

Schenck's photographic work is characterized by a "painterly" application of broad washes of light and tonality that impart a haunting romanticism.

Schenck's earliest forays into photography began as a teenager, teaching himself the rudiments of the medium in order to shoot stills for the low-budget experimental films he was writing, shooting and directing. "It was my dad who bought me the Yashica twin-lens camera I used for those stills," Schenck remembers.

A relentless traveler and explorer, Schenck has journeyed throughout the American South, Mexico and North America, Europe, England and Norway, discovering new and stimulating scenes and environments in which to photograph. Where many photographers often become trapped by the self-limiting qualities of highly specific techniques, Schenck says that the potentialities of his technique remain limitless. "It works with any subject but, of course, the subject matter has to interest me," remarks Schenck, who says that the one

common denominator in his work is the constant search for elements of dramatic narrative.

Schenck works exclusively with a 35mm camera and three different lenses—a 35mm, 50mm and 105mm—each adapted and fitted with the different materials he uses to create his special effects. "I'm fairly mobile and drag my cameras with me everywhere, just in case I see something," says Schenck. "When I shoot these images, they are usually not premeditated or contrived. I simply take my camera with me wherever I go and try to remain open to whatever life shoves or gently places in front of me."

In addition to his fineart activities, Schenck maintains a fairly active commercial career, working primarily for Verve Records, shooting CD packages, in addition to taking on selected portraiture assignments.

Schenck received his first one-person exhibition in 1988—the second was mounted in 1990 at the Tom Cugliani Gallery in New York City. He has recently had a 10-year retrospective at the Wittliff Gallery in San Marcos, Texas, which owns 150 of his photographs. "That first show happened by accident, but it gave me the incentive to keep producing," says Schenck. "It changed my whole life."

Schenck's work has been featured in *Art in America*, *Artforum* and *Aperture*. A monograph of his photographs is scheduled for publication this fall, and features a foreword by writer John Berendt, a collector of Schenck's work. In his foreword, Berendt, most noted for

his novel *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*, captures the essential qualities that make Schenck's imagery so compelling. "His pictures have a strong narrative content," writes Berendt. "Each photograph is like a still taken from a movie that exists not on film but rather in one's memory. The one characteristic common to all of his pictures is loneliness—together with the lovely elegiac mood." —Richard Pitnick

## BOOK INFORMATION

Rocky Schenck/Photographs, 160 pages, 85 photographs, hardcover, 12 1/4 x 8 1/4 inches, published by the University of Texas Press, Austin, Texas. Release date: Oct/Nov 2003. Signed copies are available through the Paul Kopeikin Gallery, as is a special edition, signed, numbered, and including a small print.

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