

Featured Artist: Peter Vanderwarker

Peter Vanderwarker's photographs and the changing face of Boston have been inextricably entwined for nearly four decades. And that's just the beginning.

As the chronicler of Boston's "Big Dig" Central Artery Project on a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, and coauthor of two books of Boston Architecture, "Boston Then and Now," and "Cityscapes of Boston," his photos echo Boston's past and promise to resonate far into its future, too. (He calls that grant, "possibly the best ever use of federal tax dollars.")



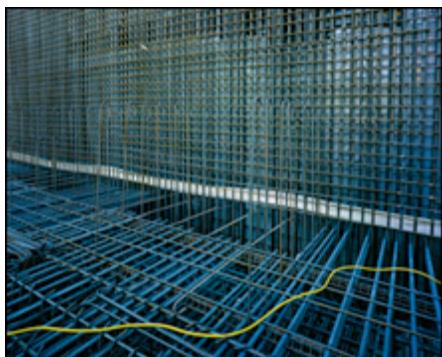
He was introduced to photography in his high school years, as a student at the Phillips Academy, Andover, MA. "They gave us all view cameras and told us we were on our own. I remember picking it up for the first time and saying, 'This is awesome,' and I was hooked," he says.

When Vanderwarker declared his desire to be a photographer, his father said, "Don't throw your life away," Vanderwarker remembers. "My Dad was smart. I wanted to go to the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), but didn't have the \$30,000. He told me, go to RISD on your own dime, or go to architecture school on mine."

A graduate of the University of California, Berkley, with a Bachelor of Architecture degree, Vanderwarker worked for three years as a graduate architect, "suffering the whole time because I wanted to be behind a camera," he recalls.

He did an unpaid stint making anti-war movies in the early '70's, where he learned to light and shoot, he says. He taught architectural design for a few years.

"I didn't figure out how to be a photographer until I was 30 when I got married. Then I started shooting and promptly starved," he says.



He shot whatever jobs he could get, but because of his teaching he knew a lot of the local architects. He began shooting for them, and continues to this day. Through this work, he began to definitively bring his architectural education and photography together.

In 1977, with zero work and a view camera, Vanderwarker wandered into the Boston Public Library and met Sinclair Hitchings, who led the library's print department for some forty years. Hitchings suggested making contemporary photos of the places pictured in the many vintage photos in the library's collection. Three years later, the collaboration resulted in the publication of "Boston, Then and Now."

Vanderwarker asked Robert Campbell, Boston Globe architecture critic, to write the forward to the book, which in turn led to their collaboration on a long-running feature in the Boston Globe magazine, that paired photos by Vanderwarker and

Campbell's text. This in turn led to the publication in 1992 of, "Cityscapes of Boston."

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The book was important to Vanderwarker's photography because, "it cemented my interest in what cities mean visually, not only what they look like; the iconography of cities," he adds.

The visual aspects of Boston have predominated in Vanderwarker's work ever since. He made thousands of images of the Big Dig. Currently he's shooting 800 photos around the city for the Boston Redevelopment Authority, "to help them tell better stories about how cities can function best," he explains.

He says of his Big Dig photos, "as you might expect, only maybe twelve were good," he adds. "That's what happens to photographers. They work for forty or fifty years and only get twenty or thirty really cool shots, except Henri Cartier-Bresson, everything he shot seems to have been good."

Vanderwarker may think only a dozen of his Big Dig shots "good," but the Boston Museum of Art judged them good enough to acquire a portfolio of the work. Vanderwarker portfolios also are among the collections of the Boston Athenaeum and the Houston Museum of Fine Arts.



Vanderwarker continues to shoot a lot, "but I am much more particular about what is a really good picture," he says. He has gravitated to abstracts and to shooting in such obscure locations as Marfa, TX, in the high desert of far West Texas, and Twisp, WA, population about 1,000.

Vanderwarker shoots almost exclusively digital these days, because it is so practical for quickly delivering work to clients. Unlike shooting 4 x 5 film, however, "with digital, the camera doesn't count anymore," he says, "I recently shot a job for a client with a point-and-shoot and the photos were beautiful."

The bad part of digital is that everything is just pixels, he adds. Some ten years ago, Vanderwarker realized that, "all my good pictures were sitting on this hard drive. I said, I want my photos out there. I should be making prints."

He turned to AutumnColor and Mark Doyle to print his archive and has continued since.

"Mark has helped me a lot because he has a really keen color sense and is a great printer who is very consistent. He'll call and tell me, "This isn't going to fly," and makes really valuable suggestions," Vanderwarker adds.

"When people ask me what they should do with their photography, I tell them to make prints and make portfolios," he explains. "You are making two-dimensional things with shape and color and form and you hope people want to look at them, study them and learn from them."

Peter Vanderwarker is represented by [Gallery Naga](#), Boston.

You can see more of his work on his website: www.vanderwarker.com

Ron Rosenstock, Paul Caponigro, to Host NANPA Roadshow, October 12

Next month's North America Nature Photography Association (NANPA) Roadshow Seminar, which will provide an opportunity for insight into what has motivated some of the acknowledged masters of photography, will be hosted by Paul Caponigro and Ron Rosenstock, two masters in their own right.

The hosts will discuss what has motivated them, share some of their experiences, and address topics such as, what keeps the flame of creativity burning brightly, what creates the need to create, and some of the major differences between silver-based photography and digital.

The seminar will be held 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Saturday, October 12, at the Hampton Inn and Suites, Thomaston, ME. The cost is \$99 for NANPA members and \$129 for non-members.

For more information, visit: www.nanpa.org.

Learn more about Paul Caponigro at: www.soulcatcherstudio.com

To learn more about Ron Rosentstock, visit: www.ronrosenstock.com.

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Thanks for your interest.

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