

THE JULIAN NEWS

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“Julian Images” Arts & Letters Program Scheduled For March 11 At Library

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Graham Wilder is a professional photographer who has loved photography his entire life. Even as a boy, his photographs displayed a vivid originality of perspective and composition that made them appear more as art than as mere snapshots. Because of an early calling to follow a spiritual path, Graham has only pursued photography as a career for the last few years. He calls his time since moving to Julian and making photography his life's work, his “third life.”

But what makes Graham's photographs so brilliant and strongly emotive can be attributed to what he calls his “second life.” For twenty-nine years, Graham lived the life of a monk in a yoga ashram, following a highly structured and balanced lifestyle of meditation and “right activity.” A complete immersion in his spiritual practice awakened in him a deeper sensitivity to the innate beauty that resides in or “behind” seemingly commonplace objects and scenes. When asked how his spiritual path has affected his art, he replies that the two are inseparable.

“The field work involved in nature photography is a meditation for me,” he states. “I don't want to get too wrapped up in trying to get a good picture; I'm out there as much for the experience as I am for the photography. I would rather truly experience the places I visit and go home with no photographs at all than return with great shots and a feeling that I was never really there.”

On the cold February morning Graham Wilder was interviewed for this story, he had already been out in the field since 5:30AM with his camera and a calm artist's mind. The Mt. Laguna area had been his destination. “Man, it was cold up there – and windy! – but also incredibly dramatic,” he reported. “I can tell you this, there is absolutely no doubt as to whether I was really there this time out!” He shot only about 25 pictures, which is “very few” for him to bring back from a morning



shoot. “I'll do it again; it's just a matter of being at the right place but also at the right time.” Still, for him it was perfect. “It was a wonderful place to be.”

Graham's “first life” was spent growing up in Michigan. As a child, he developed an innate inclination to look at his natural surroundings as though he was framing a photograph. He picked up his first camera early on, and became a devoted “hobbyist.” Graham's friends were awed and appreciative of his talent, and encouraged him to become a professional photographer. Twenty-nine years later, he took them up on the idea.

When asked to give some insight into his creative process, Graham pauses for a moment and then offers that it is, for him, a “very personal process” – one that is “difficult to explain.” But he continues, “Most of what we generally consider to be reality is based on information we receive through the very limited instruments of the five senses. Yet in our lives we are nevertheless aware of things, like love or joy, that can't be seen or touched but rather are only FELT. My ‘process’, if you will, springs somehow from this broader concept of what is real. It's like I'm floating on a thin surface between two realities; I'm IN one, and AWARE of the other. My photography is motivated more by things felt than things seen, and I believe the images I capture are capable of conveying something

of both. In that way, my photos are like windows between two ‘worlds.’ And one can look through them from either side. As for me?.....it's almost like I become the window. See, I told you it wasn't easy to explain!”

Perhaps it is this almost metaphysical approach that enables Graham to extract beauty from a mundane or even unsightly place and render it as photographic art. Wherever they're coming from, one thing is for certain: Graham's images continue to touch and delight those who are discovering them.

On Tuesday, March 11th, Graham Wilder will be showing his photography in a presentation titled “Julian Images.” The show is at 6:00PM in the Community Room of the Julian Library. Graham will be highlighting photographs of the Julian area, using the images to give insight into his unique ability to compose inspired works of art. As an added bonus, one lucky member of the audience will take home with them one of Graham's framed photographs, valued at \$295.00.

Graham's work can be seen at his Julian Images Gallery and at The Julian Art Gallery, both at 2229 Main Street, next door to the Julian Pie Company. Hours are generally from 11 to 5 on weekdays and 10 to 5 on weekends. You can also visit the Gallery on his website: www.julianimages.com.