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getting wild



P *by Julie Clay*

ICTURE FLORIDA. The palm trees, the beaches, the sunsets. Chances are you're like most, with about a thousand pictures clogging up your phone in an effort to capture that perfect moment. If you're still on that quest you may want to seek out the work of Alan S. Maltz. He is the Official Wildlife and Fine Art Photographer for the State of Florida. His photography greets you at Southwest Florida International Airport, has been featured in national and regional publications such as *The New Yorker*, *Miami Herald* and *O the Oprah Magazine*; and is a part of public, private and corporate collections throughout the world. His work brings Florida to life, whether in full scale photo prints or in one of his artfully produced coffee table books.

PHOTOGRAPHING FLORIDA

I spoke with Alan upon his latest release, *Journey Through Paradise*. Published in January 2014 by Light Flight Publications, the images are based on a project he did for the Collier County Convention & Visitors Bureau. Alan explains, "They commissioned me to do a series of iconic images for them for PR and marketing purposes. That became the basis for the book and I took it many steps further. I had X number of images already so I continued to focus on different aspects of Collier County. The first part of the book focuses on the city of Naples, and then it goes into a section with the Botanical Gardens. I captured these giant water lily pods

ago. "They call on me to do a couple of specific things once in a while," he surmises, "It's a nice title, but it's not really a working type of title. It's more of a designation and recognition of my work." Alan's quest and subsequent discovery of Florida's beauty takes him all over the state, but it's our coast that he calls favorite, sharing, "I like the outer islands, the off road type of scenarios. Sanibel and Captiva. Fort Myers has some interesting points, Naples, the Everglades, Big Cypress. I kind of move around from place to place with all the books that I've done. I just like nature." It was something of a mystical experience many years

time (1970). I got some film and a Kodak 101 photography book and left for Europe on a planned trip with some friends the next day." He continues, "We rented a car in Belgium and worked our way throughout Europe and North Africa. On the third day of that trip we were in Marseilles, France, engaged in conversation. We saw an older couple, probably mother and son. I was all ready to take my first picture, rolled down the window, and took that image." Called 'Meeting in Marseilles,' it can be found on Alan's website and to this day is one of his most famous photos. "That one and another one called 'Curiosity' were standouts," he says,

tough times that we had to get through and here we are." All these years later, Alan is now well versed in his work, having just recently delved into digital photography in the last year. However, he's not a complete fan of technology, "I'm not 100% sure that digital will yield the same type of colors that have been so prevalent in my work," he states, but admits, "I did get excellent results with digital so far. I just recently started using digital in the last eight months. Nikon's D800 36 megapixel appealed to me. I'm not sure I like all the clarity that digital brings as my work reflects a painting. Certain images might lend themselves to digital



which are no longer there because they didn't survive the frost of two years ago. Then from the Botanical Gardens it goes into the Everglades, which is my true love. From there we hit the beaches and the sea." The oversized tome also features a narrative by fellow photographer and author Karen Bartlett, "I was very happy to have her on board doing the narrative," Alan acknowledges, "She got into the spirit of how I did this book."

You might wonder how one gets the prestigious title of being Florida's 'official' photographer. For Maltz, the title came about following several local projects close to 13 years

ago that brought Alan to photography in the first place. He recalls the moment during his college graduation in the New York City area while actress Helen Hayes was giving the commencement speech.

"I heard this voice that said 'Pick up a camera.' I had never taken a picture, didn't know anything about art, but I listened to that voice. I always had one foot in the metaphysical/supernatural from 10 years old on, so I went to New York that afternoon, bought a camera and asked the guy what kind of film should I use? He gave me Kodachrome 25, which is what everyone was using at the

"Based on those two images I found my calling. I've had no formal training; I listened to the voice."

Alan recalls that listening to that voice meant following a path that wasn't much of an art form at the time, teaching himself every aspect of photography and doing weddings for many years just to stay in the industry. For anyone thinking about pursuing a photography career, he shares, "It's a tough business. It took everything I had. Follow your heart, follow your passion and don't give up if it means that much to do it. And persevere. I consider my success being my passion and love for what I do. There were some real

while others to film. It all depends on subject matter."

You can discover Alan's work for yourself either through his published works, website or by visiting his latest exhibition at the Marina at the Edison Ford Estate (just across the street, formerly a yacht club). This collection features 40 large mural size aluminum pieces and is on permanent display. You may also catch a fleeting glimpse of his work as you're running for your flight at SWFL International Airport. And if you're in Key West, you can stop by his gallery at 1210 Duval Street. •

www.alanmaltz.com