

Spotlight On: George Themelis

[This month we shine the interview light on a one of the most active people in the 3D community - a DSS member for the past eight years as well as the founder of the Ohio Stereo Photographic Society, current editor of Dimensions Three (the newsletter of the PSA Stereo Division), and an active competitor in many stereo exhibitions and salons. - Enjoy! - Ed.]



SW: George, how did you get started in stereo photography)?

I got started in stereo photography in 1988 while I was a graduate student at Northwestern University, near Chicago. In our Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM) class we had a lab on how to take stereo pairs with the SEM. I was fascinated by the stereo pairs and tried to find everything I could about the technique. I realized that I could use a single camera to take stereo pairs (which I did). I also found H. C. McKay's "Stereoscopy" book in our library and also Reel 3-D's catalog. Having seen a Stereo Realist in these references it was not long before I found one at a garage sale. I bought it for \$85 and by June of 1988 I was shooting stereo. Little did I know that this discovery would change my life!

My status of a closet stereo photographer changed in 1994 when I joined the Stereoscopic Society of America, the Detroit Stereo Club, the Photographic Society of America, and wrote a book on the Stereo Realist "red button" viewer. I then started sharing my stereo pictures with others via postal folios (SSA) club meetings (Detroit) or in Stereo Exhibitions (PSA). I also started offering my viewer repair services and viewer supplies (halogen frosted light bulbs, transformers, etc) to the stereo community. In 1997 I helped start a stereo club in Cleveland. Today I manage to keep myself busy with stereo photography and related activities.

SW: What kinds of photos do you like taking the most?

Family and vacation pictures. What most people would call "snapshots". I take a lot of pictures so some snapshots turn out to be worthy of entering in Detroit or in PSA Salons. I have also tackled other subjects/techniques but I still get most of my stereo photographic enjoyment from ordinary, handheld, pictures with my stereo camera.

SW: George, we all know you love your RBT S1. What other favorite pieces of photographic equipment do you use currently?

The Stereo Realist was my first stereo camera and it still has a place in my heart. But since I got my RBT S1 camera (this is a rangefinder camera made out of two Konica Hexar cameras) I do not use my Realist very often. I also have an RBT X3 SLR

camera with 24-90mm zoom lenses. I use SLR cameras too (one camera handheld or in a slide bar or two cameras on a bar). The RBT S1 remains my favorite stereo camera.

For viewers I use my Realist red button mostly. For projection I started with a TDC 116 but recently I got an RBT projector which has made stereo projection much more fun. I now have two RBT projectors and a dissolve unit and I would like to start producing worthy stereo programs, like Steve Kiesling has been doing for sometime now.

SW: Are you able to use your stereo photography in your occupation?

I tried to use stereo imaging as much as I could during my 12 years at LTV's Research Center. My company (LTV Steel) went out of business last year so I am currently unemployed. I now spend a good part of my time repairing Stereo Realist cameras, stereo viewers, and also buying and selling stereo photography equipment and supplies via the mail and through the Internet. My ebay auctions tend to close quite high so a number of people have given me their excess stereo equipment to sell in the Internet. I'd be happy to do the same for some of our club members.

SW: What photographic tip could you pass on to other photographers, something you have learned that improved your own photos remarkably?

Good photographs are not an accident. Well, sometimes they are, but most times they are the result of hard work and careful planning. Set higher goals for yourself. See what others are doing and try to do better. Don't be afraid to experiment and explore new areas and new tools. Some people think that they are limited by the equipment they can afford. I personally believe that most people have not explored all that can be done with an inexpensive stereo camera or a single ordinary (2D) camera. Imagination and not equipment is the limit, in my opinion.

The Detroit competition assignments have been a great motivator for a lazy photographer like myself. My advice to other members is to actively pursue the assignments, instead of just grabbing something from the pile of previously recorded stereo pictures that happen to fit the subject.

SW: Is there a photo you have wanted to take that you have not yet taken — a new style or subject you have not yet tackled?

Through my 14 years in stereo I have tackled most major subjects/techniques (hyperstereos, macro stereos, tabletops, etc), but I do not feel I have reached the limits of what can be done in these areas. One day I would like to experiment with digital manipulation, like Dennis Hanser has been doing lately, but I don't feel I am ready to try this yet.

[=][=]