

## Peter Dusek: poet, photographer

By Constance Scrafield

“I used to use colour for photography when it was a hobby, for about five years. Colour doesn't always show the details but, when I discovered the black and white, suddenly everything made sense.”

So says Orangeville's Peter Dusek, who has just as suddenly, over the past three years, experienced a meteoric surge in recognition and appreciation for his very special, very particular line of photography.

“No one is more surprised than I am about this,” he commented concerning the notice and awards he has received. “I'm still in a dream about it.”

About black and white: “It lets you assemble a story as you like – none are entirely black and white – they're always toned with a hint of colour which replicates the traditional develop methods where they used sepia or selenium for warm or cool.”

He explained further, “Now that everything is digital, you use toning. Everything goes through Photoshop. I clear up all the grass stock, et cetera, I clean the ground.”

Here is the motive for the uncluttered look of Mr. Dusek's pictures: “Even though I'm doing photography, I'm trying to emulate Japanese drawing – clean lines, simplicity.

“One of the main things I'm trying to say – in the modern world, we are bombarded with colour and noise – so, making something simple, maybe – I'm hoping this will help people take a pause to be alone to concentrate just on something.”

With a solo show coming up at the Abbozzo Gallery in Toronto in May – very exciting for Mr. Dusek – one of his photographs will be huge: nine feet wide. A simple shot of trees on a hill, where the snow has been wind-swept off the top of the hill, by the feet of the trees, thus leaving stubble of grass exposed, perfect for his purposes.

He cleaned all the grass otherwise showing through the snow, leaving the trees and the swept lines of snow cleared stubble, like the lines of a Japanese brush, one stroke, a simple statement.

It's the Japanese “Shibumi” – the title of the photograph – meaning “a quiet elegance.” Fantastic in its clarity and dreamy stance.

To learn about the theory and execution of the Japanese philosophy of art, Mr. Dusek took a course with an Orangeville-based Japanese painter, Roslyn Levin.

“I'm not so much showing people a thing as a feeling,” he pointed out.

In many ways, although his work and success is only three years on, Mr. Dusek has been in training – for this time all his adult life. Since his early twenties, as he told us, he has been interested in Tao philosophy. It was his father who introduced him to the writings of Lao Tse, the original composer of Tao thinking: “I like that it is not extreme. You should be true to your own nature – not fight your own nature and the outside world. Simplicity,” he said, “not try to make things too complicated.”

He went on, “Philosophy doesn't translate into practice – sometimes, people don't realize they're looking at a photograph. I like that they [the photographs] are so ambiguous that people interpret them. They might see things in them I never did and that's exciting for me.”

Again, since his early twenties, he has been in the habit of just driving in the country, discovering the back roads, not going anywhere in particular or with a plan – letting the roads take him where they would. Now, he still does that, looking to see what he will, what inspires him to shoot and tell the stories he brings home from the countryside.

“I'll drive all day,” he said, “and, maybe, not ‘til the end that I see something that excites me. Nature provides exactly the picture I want.”

He continued, “When I explore and look for a thing, I try to emulate one thing the eye will see – that's very difficult to realize.”

What might become known as his signature piece, as it were, is one he calls “Reaching”, an “apple tree, apparently pruned long ago and the tree started reaching up to the sky.”

His new connection to the Abbozzo Gallery happened this way: “I was meant to be doing a photo shoot for the Rotary Club in Toronto – couldn't find the place, so, I just ran into the gallery to ask directions. I started telling them about my work. Then, I asked the director to lunch and she agreed to meet me.”

From there, the Abbozzo Gallery staged a solo show for Mr. Dusek titled “Tranquility,” in one of their smaller rooms, and it sold out – twice. So, they were sold on him.

It was Saks Fifth Avenue that bought his collection twice for their flagship shops. It made Mr. Dusek understand the simple facts about financial success with art. He commented, “The whole movement about local food – in the art world, it doesn't work – you have to expand to survive.”

From Saks to the Global Furniture Group, the owners of which have also discovered Mr. Dusek's work – how extraordinary and

beautiful it is in its washed simplicity, an original take on photography that is appealing on a very deep psychological level. Much to Mr. Dusek's delight, they are staging a reception during the new exhibition- called Serenity ? inviting architects, interior designers and many others in the housing trade, thereby potentially launching Peter Dusek and his work, well and truly. More than just the trade have rewarded him for his photography. After his first show at the Abbozzo, he was awarded ?Best of 2015? by the American Society of Media Professional (ASMP), the top professional photography association in the USA, with 7,000 members over 30 Countries. Also, in 2015, he was awarded ?Best Work by an Emerging Artist? from the Ontario Society of Artists (OSA), Canada's oldest continually running art organization with early members including some of the Group of Seven. ?It made me feel very small and honoured beyond words,? he admitted. In 2016, he was elected to the Society of Canadian Artists which is ?like a dream for someone new to the world of art.? Reflecting, Peter Dusek remarked, ?Maybe, my mother is an influence in how I see things; her theory was to do as little as possible and as much as necessary.?