

# Camera capturing culture

**If a picture is worth a thousand words, then the Stephen Bulger Gallery has the equivalent of an encyclopedia on hand**

At the risk of being obvious, Stephen Bulger is the founder and president of the Stephen Bulger Gallery. Less obvious is the photography mecca that you will discover at 1026 Queen West.

Mr. Bulger developed his passion for photography at an early age. "I must have been seven or eight years old when I received my first camera as a present," says Mr. Bulger. "It was a Kodak Instamatic," he recalls.

Mr. Bulger's knowledge of photography has grown almost infinitely since then. After graduating Ryerson University with a four year Honors degree in photography in 1991, he worked at the Ontario College of Art & Design (OCAD), mostly as a technician in the Photography department.

While still working at OCAD, he decided to open his own gallery in 1995. That original gallery, located at 700 Queen West, was 1,200 square feet in size. In 2004 Mr. Bulger made the move further west and to a larger gallery. The new gallery measured 1,800 square feet, and when he amalgamated the business next door, the gallery doubled to 3,600 square feet.

The name, 'Stephen Bulger Gallery' is a little misleading however. There is much more than just traditional viewing areas.

The first half of the layout has three main areas: 1) a viewing floor to showcase the current exhibit, 2) a library with 100's of photography books for perusal and purchase, and 3) a storage facility where an inventory of approximately 15,000 photographs are preserved.

The second half of the layout also has three areas: 1) a fully licensed bar with an espresso maker, 2) a small lounge area, and 3) a theatre that can seat 50 guests. "There is a free presentation in the theatre every Saturday at three o'clock," said Mr. Bulger.

With the beautiful decor and the impressive amenities, The Stephen Bulger Gallery makes an excellent venue for private parties. The gallery can be booked for private functions, so please call the reception to inquire.

The main purpose of the gallery is, of course, to present photographs. "We feature Canadian and international artists. I am interested in the medium of photography, and the photographic process," says Mr. Bulger. "Most of the photographs will tell a story about time and place. It is very rare that we pres-

ent abstraction," he said.

There is a new exhibit almost every month with the exception of the summer, when there is one continuous show from July through August.

In addition to active presentations, Mr Bulger preserves approximately 15,000 photographs, both primary and secondary market. "Primary market photographs are available for purchase for the first time. Secondary market photographs have been previously bought and sold, and are for sale again. Our inventory consists of roughly a 50/50 mix of primary and secondary photographs," says Mr Bulger.



When asked about his selection process, Mr Bulger replied, "I seek out about 95% of the photos in the gallery. It is rare that I will represent work from an unsolicited source, although that has happened in the past. I tend to rely on my knowledge of what work is out there to find my future exhibits."

Also of particular interest to photography enthusiasts is the library. There are hundreds of books on the shelf, and every book relates to photography somehow. If you really like some of the books, you can always buy them and take them home with you.

As for culture, Mr. Bulger has his own definition. "I believe that culture is anything that elevates the senses, improves the quality of life and is therefore enjoyable." As a Toronto native, Mr. Bulger sees a bright future for culture in Toronto. "I was born and raised in Toronto, so I have seen a huge improvement in the quality of art, platforms, and roles people play in culture. I believe this trend will continue into the future."



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