

# Art Seen - Stephan Brigidi



Photographer, artist and entrepreneur, Stephan Brigidi has a show of recent work in (real) Black and White from October 17 through November 16. It is nicely produced and presented and is a pretty straightforward folio of his artistry, along with other constructions and collage and a simply stunning book on Venice. It is back for a one-stop show at the Gallery Z in Providence, which is entering a new era - a metamorphosis into another new location - as Studio Z, which officially opened October 19 with Self Portrait; Drunken Horses paintings by Ron Ehrlich, in the Eagle Street part of town. Ah, the vision of Berge Ara Zobian is endless.

In the past 40 years, I've watched Brigidi emerge as a strong influence in the Rhode Island art scene with his exhibitions, publications, teaching and work in photography. His often-somber demeanor is his hallmark, and the serious way in which he approaches his subject is as a dedicated viewer of the passing of time. "The City," the title of his current show, is as serious as its maker. The near casual presentation of the silver gelatin prints is undisturbed as it presents in each handsome frame, to be looked upon as a near archaeological find, a capsule or parcel of a suspended moment, forever recorded on fiber paper and offered up with the classical approach to art in full view.

With only a handful of traditional (now also referred to as analog, wet-lab, old fashion, real, messy, pictures) truest purest "*photogs*" remaining, darkroom work has returned as a serious form of alchemy from which it came more than a century and a half past. Darkroom photography no longer is in the hands of the amateur, the shutterbug, or hobbyist. It's where serious photography results from magic; voodoo, hocus-pocus. The realm of art alone has reclaimed the tradition — chemical based work as a well-established tradition, unlike its fancy new cousin, digital imaging. There are no pixels or programs here. No tricky apps. No auto anything. Basic black and white is about basic machines and clarity of thought - poetry between the eye and the subject.

Stephan Brigidi has long earned my respect as a person with a camera making art. This new offering of his work is no exception to the rules long ago established by the masters for the minions. The stark neo-realism inherent in his every image is possibly wasted on the unknowing or unsophisticated eye. There's no eye candy here, just forms, light, shadow, tonal range and sharpness - the vocabulary of the purest.

The subject-oriented images are well claimed and technically sublime. Well done.

Brigidi's book is a small masterpiece filled with delights from my favorite city in the world: Venice, Italy. This is a great read and a real collector's piece. His written work is as tasty and meaningful as the images that embellish and portray the book itself. In many ways, Stephan Brigidi's book may be his finest moment indeed.

This show is well worth the visit, but only if you want to see what photography was really destined to be as an art form. There is nothing flashy, techno-gimmicky or irresponsible in this work. It weighs much, but is priced very reasonably for the true art enthusiast. Great shopping for the holiday season.