

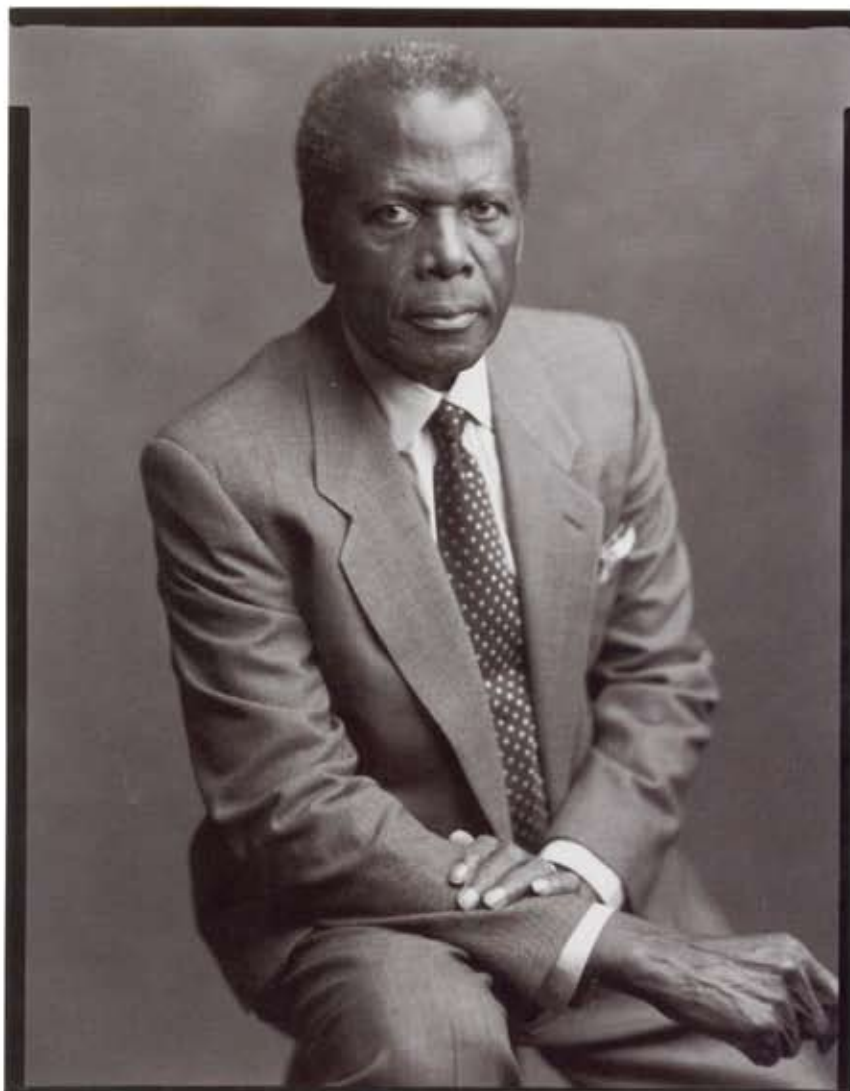
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2007

SIX DOLLARS AND NINETY-FIVE CENTS

VIEW **CAMERA**

THE JOURNAL OF LARGE FORMAT PHOTOGRAPHY

OUR 20TH YEAR OF PUBLICATION



PHOTOGRAPH BY TIMOTHY GREENFIELD-SANDERS

Special Portfolios

Timothy Greenfield-Sanders, Kerik Kouklis, Peter Liepke, Ron Smid

Fall 2007 Printer Roundup

The 7 x 17 Project

080805

THE ART OF CANADIAN LANDSCAPE

Photographs and text By Ron Smid

Not long after I began to pursue nature landscape photography seriously, I learned that I was about to embark on the most exciting adventure of my life. I realized not only that it was going to take years to put into practice the theory I had discovered from books, through an intensive process of trial and error, but also that I would need to define my creative path as an artist solely on my own.

I developed a fierce passion for wilderness landscape photography during canoe excursions to the rugged Canadian Shield of Northern Ontario. I was not willing to compromise my photographic vision for the commercial marketplace, and found little success in the modern-day stock photography business. Focusing exclusively on creating images that moved me, I began the long, arduous journey toward an uncertain future, like so many other aspiring fine art photographers.

I was 26 years old in 1999, when I set out to take my first photo expedition across Western Canada. This life-changing experience took me as far north as Inuvik, Northwest Territories, and as far west as Vancouver Island, where I now reside. Little did I know that the three-month journey would be the catalyst for an eventual full-time career as a landscape photographer. Inspired by the work of David Muench, Galen Rowell, and Craig Blacklock, as well as the Canadian painters *Group of Seven*, I became determined to forge my own photographic vision, with the wild expanse of Canada as my canvas.

Having developed my personal style using a 35mm camera, I progressed to larger format cameras as my understanding of the relationship between light, film, and the time needed to fine tune each composition increased. I began to take fewer and fewer photographs, as I longed to capture only the crowning moments of the Canadian Landscape on film.

In time, several of my images began to appear on the covers of scenic art calendars, and I earned my first commissioned solo calendar project in 2004. This fueled my commitment as a fine art photographer. I worked to attain a higher level of creative control throughout the entire process, from image selection to actual marketing of my work.

In 2005, I founded *Red Maple Publishing* and released my first self-published Canadian wall calendar, which included both photographs and text of my journeys across the immense and diverse Canadian landscape. Since then, I have continued to produce a calendar of my work annually, personally handling all sales and distri-

bution to hundreds of retail locations across Canada.

It was during this time that I entered into the world of 4x5 photography. Not only did it allow me to take my work to a higher level, with its larger film and methodical approach to composition; it also brought me closer to the very roots of traditional photography itself.

I was part of the next generation of photographers when digital photography was emerging. I started doing experiments with the latest digital printing from my scanned transparencies, when an unexpected turning point in my career happened. I accidentally came across a forgotten hand-printed Ilfochrome (formerly known as Cibachrome) photograph from a stack of lost files. I was immediately taken by its deep, saturated colors and tremendous sense of visual depth, which were noticeably lacking in my digital prints by comparison.

I became disenchanted by the rapid advancement of photographic technology that bore no relevance to my emotional reasoning for capturing landscape photographs in the first place. More than ever did I need to simplify my approach and determine what was truly important to me as an artist. Rejecting the digital medium altogether, I felt revitalized with my new chosen direction and renewed sense of purpose in my work. I also found there was an ever-increasing appreciation for traditional photographs among art connoisseurs.

As my work began to sell, I found it increasingly difficult to retain a long-term relationship with print labs, as they were no longer willing or able to spend the required time to produce an exceptional quality traditional print that met my expectations. Not long after the lab I had been working with abandoned their analog processes, I was fortunate enough to come across master Ilfochrome printer Michael Wilder, and immediately realized that I had found what I was looking for at last.

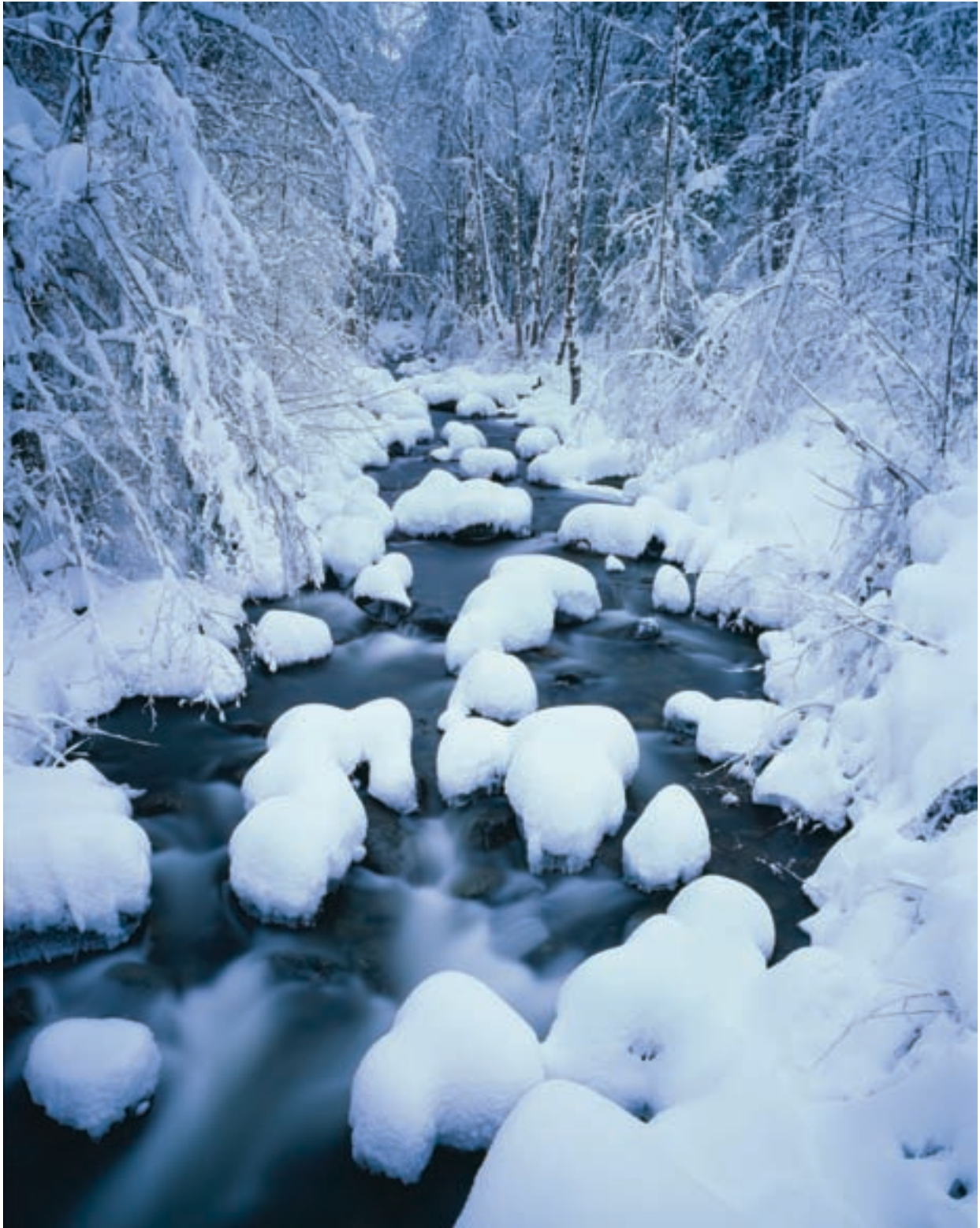
Over the course of three decades, Wilder's reputation for quality color printing has been legendary. Committed to producing only the finest traditional Ilfochrome prints humanly possible, Wilder's work has attracted some of the world's finest photographers, including Ansel Adams and the Ansel Adams Trust, who commissioned him to print a selection of rare color images.

During our initial meeting, we discovered a common vision regarding our goals and ideals. We immediately began to collaborate on the *Canada - The Light on Our Land* collection, a series of limited edition photographs chronicling over a decade of my wilderness travels across Canada.



Wings of Light (30"x40" Ilfochrome) - Ebony SV45U2, Schneider Super-Symmar XL 80mm/4.5, Fuji Velvia 50. Exposure 1/15.

For hours, I watched the distant island of trees appear and recede in the continuous ebb and flow from the shifting veil of mist, as the cool monochromatic scene slowly gave way to the dawn of a new day. Suddenly, the powerful rays from the rising sun diffused with the hazy landscape, and, for a brief moment, transformed the cascading water before me into a beautiful ribbon of gold as the moment was captured on film. As quickly as it appeared, the subtle radiant glow and haunting mist were lost to the intensifying sun, instantly reverting the once outer-worldly scene back to that of the mundane.



Holland Creek - Ebony SV45U2, Schneider Super-Symmar XL 80mm/4.5, Fuji Velvia 50, 10 minute exposure.

A particularly heavy snowfall had transformed the forest trail along Holland Creek into a winter wonderland. I became lost in the moment as the snow-clad stream magically came alive on the ground glass of my wooden camera and later on a 4x5-inch sheet of film.



Schoen Lake in Winter (30" x 40" Ilfochrome) - Ebony SV45U2, Schneider Super-Symmar 110mm/5.6, Fuji Velvia 50.

It was a cold December morning when I made the journey to Northern Vancouver Island to photograph the frigid shoreline of Schoen Lake. Leaving the camera set up for the entire day, I patiently waited for the last light and enveloping fog to capture my first successful 4x5 image.



Ferns in Autumn (30"x40" Ilfochrome) - Ebony SV45U2, Schneider Super-Symmar 110mm/5.6, Fuji Velvia 50.

Not long after I began using the large format wood camera, I developed a new way of seeing. I began to turn my eye toward the more delicate and intimate landscapes often overlooked, knowing that the large negative would portray even the most diminutive detail with utmost clarity. While traveling through La Maurice National Park in Quebec, a cluster of colored foliage at the side of the road caught my eye. I pulled over to find this lively grouping of ferns in autumn colors, and carefully selected a composition that would best communicate the scene onto film.

After hours of painstakingly applying his trademark contrast masking technique on each of my images, Wilder spends up to several days working on a single photograph. If he encounters any difficulty replicating a particular shade or color within part of the scene, or needs to remove any imperfections, Ilfochrome azo dyes are remarkably painted in by hand, without any trace of their application.

Each of the 30x40-inch prints is mounted on aluminum, to ensure that the glossy mirror-like quality of the Ilfochrome is retained. Each image is then signed and limited to an edition of 25 photographs.

The final result is an extraordinarily vivid, almost three-dimensional art piece unlike any other medium, imparting a strong sense of being present at the scene, and effectively communicating to the viewer the emo-

tions I experienced the moment the shutter was released.

Since 2005, The Summit Gallery of Fine Art, in Banff, Alberta, has been representing my landscape work. Committed to promoting the art of photography, The Summit Gallery currently contains the most extensive collection of my Ilfochrome prints in Canada, and continues to draw an increasing international audience from across North America, Europe, and beyond.

Today, I continue to travel throughout the immense and ever-changing landscape of Canada, capturing its timeless moments onto film. I continue to search for new and dynamic landscapes, while revisiting memorable ones with fresh eyes. I am determined to remain true to my vision, while infusing even more passion and excitement into my life's work than ever before.

For more information go to www.ronsmid.com.