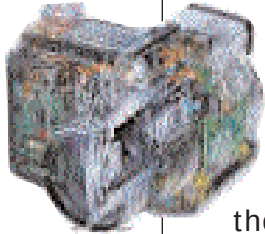


Digital Photography: What Does It Mean?

By Skip Schiel



We are privileged to live on the cusp of two approaches to photography traditional or film based, and digital or electronically based. What does this mean for photography? How does it affect how photographers make photos and how audiences view photos?

To get a start on these questions I'd like to critically examine a set of digital photos I found in *Digital Image Creation*, edited by Hisaka Kojima, published in 1996. Also the photos of Pedro Meyer, a premier digital photographer.

In the book, I found myself drawn to many photos, despite their frequent origins in commercial photography. (Fashion, sales, persuasion and other money-based approaches to photography can degrade a key grander motive of art: examination of our collective condition.) The photos of Judy Dole, Elle

Schuster, Jim Carroll, Robert Bowen, Michel Tcherevkoff, Carol Flax, Charly Franklin, Douglas Kirkland, Sonjay Kothari, and Daniel Lee stand out. They are surprising, innovative, pointed, mysterious, engrossing. And collectively they may point to the future or one future of photography. What are some of the characteristics of this new photography?

Colors are heightened, or muted, veering between reality and surreality. Images interpenetrate, skins are permeable, figures join and detach. Objects float, not

anchored, yet often cast shadows as if real objects. A dreamlike spirit pervades many of the photos, something flowing from the night when demons and god figures are free to roam thru our psyches.

Time expands, contracts, swirls to include the next moment, the time long ago when I can watch a man photograph a dinosaur.

A prime question raised by much digital photography is what is real? Since photography traditionally has been anchored to the once-upon-a-time-this-existed, the exact correspondence between a extant thing and an image is what

people expect to perceive (despite the existence since the 1850s of manipulated photos). Not so now. Perhaps some of the components of the digital image were once actual, or perhaps none were; all might be a product of imagination and digital manipulation. Photography has grown

