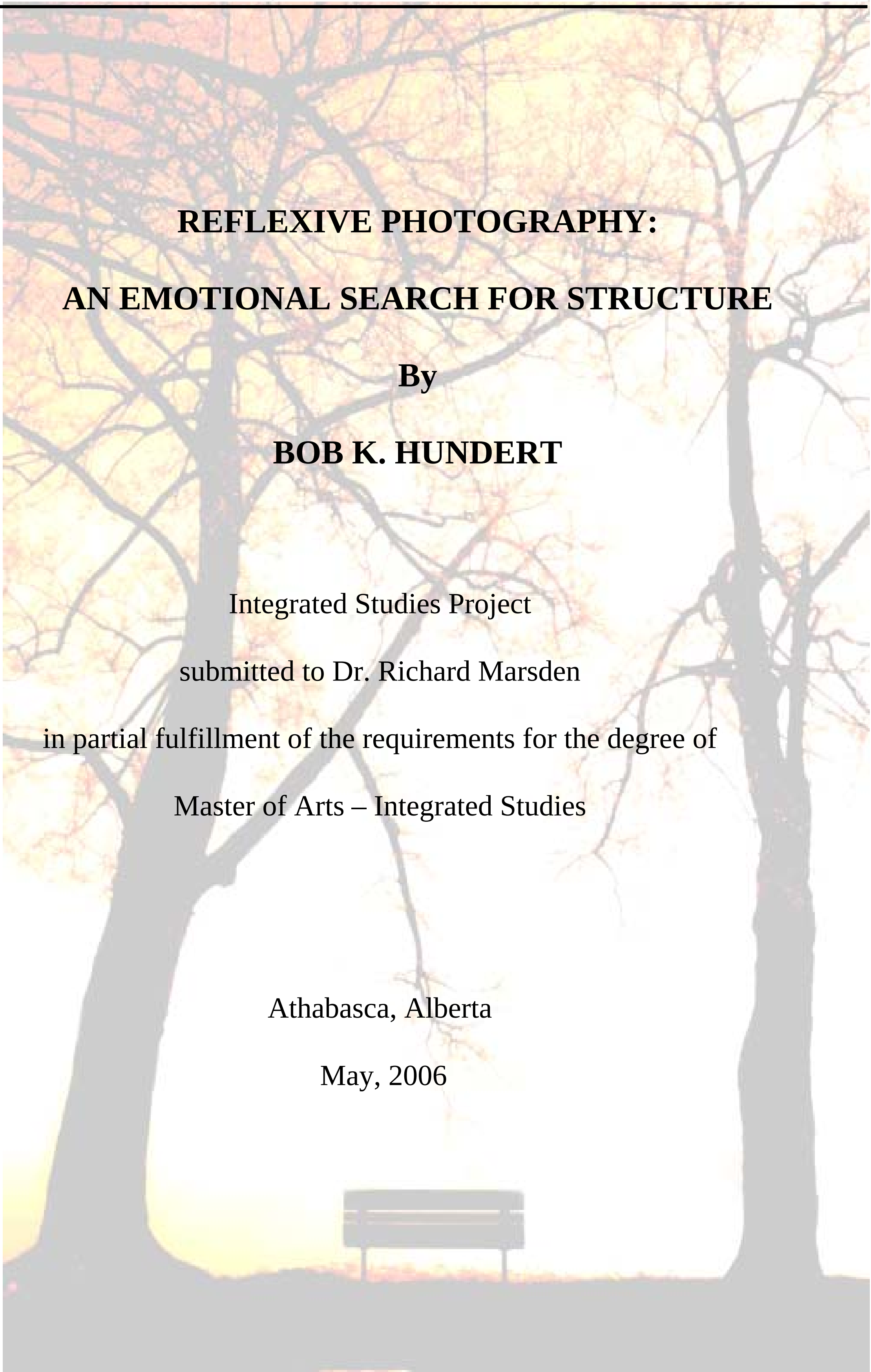
Athabasca University Master of Arts - Integrated Studies



REFLEXIVE PHOTOGRAPHY:

AN EMOTIONAL SEARCH FOR STRUCTURE

By

BOB K. HUNDERT

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Contents

Preface 4

Introduction 6

Part One*: *Seeing With Emotions

Retrospective 9

Photographic Seeing: An Emotional Perspective 11

Emotions 13

Emotional Design 17

Elements and Principles of Design 17

In-Camera and On-Camera Design 20

The Principle of Emotional Design 22

Part Two*: *The War of 1812 Romanticism Gallery

Prologue 24

War of 1812: Romanticism Gallery 27

Bibliography 34

References 36

“You cannot depend on your eyes when your imagination is out of focus”.
—Mark Twain

Preface

During the fall of 1999, in the middle stages of my life, I celebrated the beginning of a journey. It was to be a journey of self-discovery; an empirical approach to who I was as a person and visual artist, driven by the critical practices of photography and adult education. This journey would be one of complexities that tells the story of how I, as photographer and educator, attempt to unlock the inner mysteries of emotional photography that punctuate all of the elements of a meaningful picture. I wanted to make sense of photographs that communicate my passion for enhancing the veracity of the camera’s intended object without creating invention. This would be an exploration into the way pictures represent a deeply personal and expressive experience, while providing guidelines on how to observe the world through the lens of an emotional photographer, discovering a balance between fact and fantasy.

I became aware early on that I was looking at the world in a different way than the camera sees it, or other people for that matter, although, I will not assume to prescribe or understand the complexities of other’s ability to interpret vision. I was inspired, not by the way nature presented itself, but by the feelings that developed when I looked at the world around me. Sometimes change is directly visible and sometimes it is introspective, altering the meaning of the foreground. The feelings I experience are a causable action of an inner desire to enhance the natural beauty of the camera’s subject, which provides the basis for the artistic possibilities that photography offers. Those feelings are a physiological manifestation that results from a change in events. The noticeable change was emotionally inspiring for me and began a quest to develop emotions as inspiration for interpretive visualization. This would be the beginning of my entry into the realm of emotional photography.

The theoretical approach to “REFLEXIVE PHOTOGRAPHY: AN EMOTIONAL SEARCH FOR STRUCTURE” is an autobiographical gaze into critically responsive emotions, and truth, and how the interconnectivity of mind and body work to contrast the various ways we see. I needed to respond to my frustrations of seeing the world, and the people in it, as fragmented and imperfect, because the events that shaped my life refused to recognize a predetermined global canvas. My aim was to travel along an experiential plane that presents a unique picture of how photographers interpret subjects that appear truthful, while using an inspirational approach. In doing so, I wanted to rekindle the sense of importance and purpose of photographic seeing through a photographer’s affective lens.

This paper sets forth the purpose for which creativity is appropriated. It then presents suggestions on how photographers are enlightened and critically stimulated to reflect an emotional purpose for artistic expression.

Introduction

As a photographer who identifies his artistic style more with creative interpretations and less with an effortless reproduction of a subject, I often ask myself why I am drawn to images that evoke an emotional response. I have designed numerous photographs that were created to reflect a personal ideology which embodies emotions. When I look at a scene, I tend to interpret what I see from an aesthetic point of view, which is essentially an affective way of looking at people, places or events. I am usually drawn to more places than people or events, largely because of a deep seated admiration for nature’s innate splendor, and because I have less creative control over people, and even less over events. For now at least, I’ll leave people to portrait illustrators and events to visual sociologists to examine.

I often wonder why I am so attached to nature’s surroundings, and why I search for a hidden beauty that too often escapes the naked eye and frequently the camera’s lens. Why do I keep my photographs openly displayed—usually in different places around the house where I can always appreciate the experience of creating them—hoping people will stop and absorb their “natural” beauty, as if I wanted them to relive my experiences of viewing nature as a canvas on which I project emotions? Even when my pictures are not being viewed, I know they are still there, visible and a constant reminder that there is a concealed world other than the one which engulfs the routine of our everyday lives.

I value those photographs, not for their obvious viewing pleasure, but because they are a reflective representation of my photographic seeing and not an unadorned reproduction of the camera’s intended object. Design is important to me, but how I complete the design depends on what I see and in which context I see it. Above all, the design depends on my emotional state at the time I am interpreting the subject. My photographs are more than utilitarian reproductions of the world around us. As works of art they brighten my day, but more importantly each image conveys a personal meaning. They tell a story—a story of who I am as a photographer. They reflect my past, my struggle against everything in the world that is hateful and menacing, but more importantly, every image reflects my desire for magnificence.

> “Shared ways of seeing are socially constructed and currently, fashionably, criticized and deconstructed, but when you are able to attend to something new or to see the familiar in a new way, this is a creative act.” (Bateson, 1994, 10)

In the world of two-dimensional photography, this task is accomplished, not merely by constructing the elements of design for a balanced composition, but more importantly, by applying design principles to those elements for a greater appreciation of the skeletal design. In doing so, the image reflects the personal values of the design artist; in this case that artist is me. Because the power of emotion fades with time, creative photography must provide more than a simple picture; it must embody the eternalizing of the emotions that create it.

This brings me to suggest a new principle of design that makes photography a meaningful experience; *The Principle of Emotional Design: To mobilize emotional reflexes that affectively enhance the design elements for a greater visual appeal.* This is to say, by activating our emotional responses, which includes embracing our inner feelings, we are able to elevate how we value and interpret the design, which develops a pleasing, and personal, representation of it. Because the existence of many kinds of emotional reflexes is central to my theme, I have included these other layers of awareness in this text; they are all relevant. The layers are incorporated to represent photographic seeing from all three levels of emotional reflexes, sequentially, which evoke layers of feeling the scene being photographed.

In his book *Emotional Design: Why we love (or hate) everyday things* (2004), Donald Norman refers to design as personal and emotional, and without emotions our decision making ability would be impaired.

> Beyond the design of an object, there is a personal component as well, one that no designer or manufacturer can provide. The objects in our lives are more than mere material possessions. We take pride in them, not necessarily because we are showing off our wealth or status, but because of the meaning they bring to our lives. [V]isceral, behavioral, reflective: These three very different dimensions are interwoven through any design. This is so despite the common tendency to pit cognition against emotion. [E]motions are inseparable from and a necessary part of cognition. Everything we do, everything we think is tinged with emotion, much of it subconscious. In turn, our emotions change the way we think, and serve as constant guides to appropriate behavior, steering us away from the bad, guiding us toward the good (Norman, 6).

Emotional design can be utilized by photographers to enhance understanding of the creative dynamics of photography. Photographers should enable a correlation between the depth of seeing/interpreting the scene of the photographic design and the “layers” discovered in emotional design.

Part One

Seeing With Emotions

Retrospective

Having come from a white middle class, non-Christian family, growing up in a socially hostile environment where tolerance was widely rejected, I can best describe my childhood as an uneven mix of some pleasure and much trepidation. Unhappy childhoods seem to produce writers, entertainers and in some cases, photographers—the common thread being an outlet for artistic expression. I suppose anxiety and fear is motivation enough for a retrospective look into a seemingly uncertain future, which opens the door to self-expression. Of course, I wasn't thinking in terms of being a photographer early on, I was inwardly consumed with thoughts of how to escape an antagonistic environment which inwardly appeared to breed anti-Semitic sentiments most of the time. My anxiety over unsavory elements, of which I had little control, was the catalyst to understanding my creative process.

My formative years were also spent absorbing my father's bitter memories of growing up during the Depression era, modeled by an Edwardian approach to obedience, with a loving mother and ruthless father. My father, who learned to overcome his consternation for repression, also discovered his inner voice through the camera's lens, as he spent much of his time photographing the world around him. I suppose we are all of us made by the world we live in, perverse and affected by our environment. Nevertheless, we seem to adapt.

In flight from the tireless reality of a compliant existence, I began shaping my own world by taking pictures at the impressionable age of thirteen with a camera my father proudly gave me for my birthday. On the other hand, he rarely provided any instructions on the best way to use the camera, relying only on his natural ability to inspire creativity through performance and not training. He only encouraged me to use the camera when I “felt” like it and as often as I “desired”.

Not completely understanding his wisdom at the time, I recall an epiphanous episode late one evening, during an ice storm, when my family looked out the window with astonishment at the measure of nature’s awesome power. There were gale force winds and freezing rain forming sheets of thick ice on trees, breaking limbs, while everyone delighted at the thought of not being outside in its elements. As they left the room, I continued to stare at the wonderment of the natural world consumed with fear and awestruck with excitement. I stood there, all alone, mesmerized by the distant haze of street lights reflecting off the shimmering ice that seemed to sculpture the trees in front of our house. With howling winds and large pellets of ice threatening to shatter the glass in front of me, I picked up my camera and captured a moment that patterned my ability to see the world artistically, and for the very first time. This was my introduction into the mystical and interpretive realm of creative photography; this would be my opportunity to use the camera to take up arms with which to change to world.

I later came to believe that I was more liberated than most people because photography enabled me to communicate emotions. For me, creativity is a process of individual seeing, taking the raw data, the critical and unexamined, into the interpretive sphere of artistic expression. Much of my photography emerges out of empirical developments, drawing upon childhood memories and current social concerns that allow me to see in a very personal and meaningful way. Over the years, I’ve attempted to accommodate what I admire in the world, often from a romantic perspective, incorporating ecological consciousness and responsibility. Photographic seeing is a retrospective way of interpreting the world by committing to the spiraling practice of looking back to move forward. What we see is always conceptually mediated and sometimes interpreted as artistic expression. From my perspective, artistic expression also represents self-determination.

Photographic Seeing: An Emotional Perspective

For many centuries, people all over the world have created and valued pictures. Everywhere we gaze, and at every turn, we see images about the world that provide us with a language of visual communication. Photographs are of great importance because of their ability to communicate about issues, places and people. However, the gap that lies between a visual perception of the world, and photography's representation of it, has fascinated visual artists and other thinkers for years. However, when viewing paintings and drawings, we often attempt to translate them—we deliberate over the meaning implied by the artist. Why did the artist make a concerted effort to interpret the scene in a particular manner? It is generally assumed that the scene does not appear in the painting, or illustration, the way it appeared to the artist's naked eye. It is also generally accepted that the artist has, in some manner, responded to their reflexes and unique way of seeing the object being interpreted. On the other hand, when viewing a photograph, it is normal to believe that it represents 'truth'—the photograph is an accurate record of something which exists.

Nevertheless, Susan Sontag believes, "Photographs are as much an interpretation of the world as paintings and drawings are" (Sontag 1977, 6). Sontag's assertion gives rise to the notion that photographs are a product of the photographer's ability to see and interpret the scene in a personal way. Whether photographs are a product of social documentary or creative illustration, they can be comprehensive, in that the photographer interprets the subject to serve a variety of purposes beyond his own. The camera is merely a device designed to make a precise copy of a scene through a series of mechanical functions. It lies motionless and emotionless—the camera does not think or make any judgments, it reproduces what it is expected to reproduce. It is an instrument that will instantly capture a moment and archive it for perpetuity, preserving detail exactly as the photographer sees it.

Most of us have a tendency to view the world empirically, but there are others whose observations of reality differ. Victor Burgin points out a commonly misunderstood phenomenon about pictures. He says, "Photography is most commonly encountered in sociological texts as 'evidence', the sociologist operating with the common-sense intuition of photography as a 'window on the world" (Burgin, 1994, 2). It is true that most photographic analysts generally look at pictures from a superficial perspective which interprets them as an accurate documentation of an event. On the other hand, Burgin takes his interpretations one step further to a more meaningful way photographs communicate to us. He states, "Consider photography in its totality as a general cultural phenomenon, and develop [your] own ideas as to what direction to pursue" (Burgin, 3). This is an argument that advances photographic seeing to a higher level of understanding and appreciation of the assumptions and assertions that the picture's influence is indisputable. Photography, in its purist form, is applied physics, but how we manipulate the camera's mechanical functions transcends science into the realm of creativity, which allows the photographer to visually communicate. Creativity itself ultimately rests with the values and mind of the individual, interconnecting emotions with cognition.

By selecting an appropriate lens that reflects the photographer's perspective of the scene, in juxtaposition with shutter and aperture settings, and in conjunction with digital processing tools, an enhanced image is able to replicate the photographer's intended representation of the scene. The digital camera is able to provide instant satisfaction by allowing the photographer to view the image without the old process of waiting for film to be developed. This function enables the reinforcement of design decisions at the time of image capture and aids in the intermingling of emotions and cognition. Not only does the photographer make choices from behind the camera, but those choices are generally reflective of the manner in which the photographer views the subject. What is left for interpretation is not the recorded object, but the object's place in the world as seen by the image-maker.

Nevertheless, the camera is still only a tool that is controlled by the photographer, and it is the technical decisions and judgments—analogous to the nuances of critical thinking and reflective practices—which leads the image maker to shape the interpretation of the object photographed that renders photography personal. On the other hand, the brief moment it takes most people to capture a picture does not always allow time for interpretation, only for recording the object, unless, of course, the photograph is designed in response to the photographer's emotions.

Emotions

Today, we embark upon a visual realm in photography that could not have been imagined even a generation ago. New technologies provide today's photographer with the freedom to create image design that is more analogous to traditional fine art mediums than images practiced within its own historical references. However, creativity and unimpeded artistic expression may be sacrificed because technology is fast becoming the benchmark for successful outcomes. Have photographers ceased to value their emotions because of a complex and explicit response to adapting soft skills that appear faster and easier?

Digital imaging is an exciting new process that allows photographers to visually communicate emotions in ways traditional film processes never could, if applied in response to the photographer's artistic interpretations. Digital photography is a process that enables photographers to replicate their ideas by using technology to enhance the tonal value and colour of the scene, and in some cases changes them. However, unless the digital camera is seen as something more than a mechanical device, and the software used to process the raw data is implemented as an effective way of understanding the increasing complexities of vision and thought, technology is destined to become the dominant design tool. The discontinuity between overt applications of technology and fine arts photography is thorough and complex, with delineation being discovered in how we visually communicate our emotions.

Unlike painting, a photographic mindset established limits on creativity in the early days of the medium. This was largely due to the slow and awkward design of traditional cameras which forced long film exposures that inhibited expressive freedom. However, in the 1940's, the iconic photographer Ansel Adams developed a codification of approaches to photography that enabled creative expression when interpreting pictures. Adams speculated that the purest form of photography was to visualize the final image from a given set of conditions. Those conditions are commonly known as the Zone System, (Adams, 1991). The Zone System incorporates a mathematical approach to altering light densities and contrast levels that enhance the creative and subjective process of photographic design. Adams' main approach was to interpret the original scene by freely interpreting photographic seeing as a "highly subjective departure from reality", (Adams, 1).

Whether a photograph is a literal transcription of the superficial world around us or a creative departure from it, the final outcome should be a result of the photographer's emotional responses that shape photographic seeing. The defining difference between recording a photograph, and valuing it, is discovered in the interpretive skills of the artist who establishes the process of photography as emotional.

"Emotions are caused by a perceived positive or negative significant change in our personal situation" (Ben-Ze'ev, 2000, 13). These are changes that interrupt a situation relevant to our normal perceptions of it. We respond to change by paying attention to it, which is of emotional significance. Being emotional forces us to pay special attention to the changes that created the emotion and it is that emotional response which establishes how we feel, (Ben-Ze'ev, et al.). Those feelings can also be a manifestation of the real or imagined which creates a cause and effect relationship with those changes.

Although emotions only occur when a change in events concerns us, they express our attitude toward those significant changes that are affective. Emotions may be looked at not only as an expression of our reflexes, but also as a way of evaluating the changes that caused the emotion. Evaluating these changes may be accomplished using diverse perspectives. From a photographic perspective, the evaluation may be manifested by how we feel about the camera's image, or how the photographer wishes to represent the scene which reflects their emotional response to it. A significant change in a situation will also induce a typology of emotions like sadness, happiness, pride, regret or anger, to name a few, but whichever emotion prevails is one that is relative to the situation and unique to the photographer's perception of that change.

There are two basic types of emotions, primary and secondary. A primary emotion is innate and designed to respond to specific features of stimuli in our surroundings, or in our bodies, and is perceived as such. Examples of these features are certain sounds which trigger a visceral response, like loud noises that could alarm us. It should also be noted, "In order to cause a body response, one does not even need to recognize the noise as danger, or to know what, precisely, is causing the pain, or fear" (Damasio, 2000, 131).

Primary emotions do not provide a comprehensive description of emotional behaviours and, therefore, do not play a significant role in how photographers design their pictures. However, secondary emotions occur once the body begins experiencing feelings and forming systematic connections between categories of objects and situations. An example of a secondary emotion is a physiological change in the body state defined by numerous variations in different areas of the body. A similar condition would occur when reliving the experiences of an old friend; your heart beat would increase dramatically, skin temperature would fluctuate and facial muscles would alter around the mouth and eyes causing a positive or happy expression. Conversely, upon hearing the news of the death of someone close to you, your heart rate would increase, your skin tone would go pale, gastro muscles would contract, and neck and back muscles would go tense, while facial muscles would create a look of sadness. (Damasio, et al.).

Emotions therefore, are a result of a cognitive/evaluative state, whereas feelings are a circumstance of a physiological state resulting from emotions. Moreover, feelings are also a result of a physiological change that constitutes an emotional response. Damasio describes an emotion as,

> A collection of changes in body state connected to particular mental images that have activated a specific brain system, the essence of feeling an emotion is the experience of such changes in juxtaposition to the mental images that initiated the cycle. In other words, the feeling depends on the juxtaposition of an image of the body proper to an image of something else, such as the visual image of a face of the auditory image of a melody (145).

When there is interconnectivity between the mind and body that creates a reflexive response to significant changes which affect our current state, a secondary [emotional] response communicates how we feel about that change. If emotions are a response to events and our ability to evaluate those conditions, then feelings present the physiological support needed to experience emotions and all the subtleties, thereby creating the structure for emotional design. Suffice it to say that the primary emotion triggers the bodies call to action, and is manifested by the secondary emotion which creates a behavioural response. It is our reaction to change, and how we evaluate it, which determines how the photograph visually communicates its design.

Emotional Design

Elements and Principles

When viewing a subject and determining the photograph's design, the elements for constructing a pleasing image are already in place, unless a still-life is being assembled in a controlled environment where the process of design begins with the absence of elements. This makes thoughtless reproduction a simple and unimpeded process that only requires some basic technical knowledge of the camera's operating functions; in other words, point and shoot. On the one hand, if a well balanced composition is desired, and it should be, then the camera's operator needs to discern the subject's referent by controlling which of its elements will make an effective, and creative, composition. The effectiveness of the design is determined by the rules of design. On the other hand, creativity can be motivated to inspire critique by using the Principle of Emotional Design to articulate the photographer's artistic voice.

In his book *Introduction to Two-dimensional Design: Understanding Form and Function*, John Bowers defines visual elements by saying, "Whether geometric or organic, all form is built on basic elements" (Bowers, 1999, p.38). Of the seven common elements of design, each one should be utilized if the design calls for it. Regrettably, Bowers fails to point out that is it is not always possible, or plausible, to use all of the elements, depending on the nature of the subject and the design's intended objective. For example, if a photographer's interpretation demands a half-tone representation that does not require the use of *colour*, adding colour would only dilute the design's visual response. It should be noted however, that an effective photograph should utilize as many design elements as possible to communicate the photographer's representation of it. On the other hand, regardless of how many elements are used to construct a balanced design, elements alone are inadequate without properly applying the principles of design to give them meaning.

Applying principles of design is similar to constructing the elements, in that it may not be necessary to use all of them, depending on how the design communicates its purpose and meaning. In this regard, Bowers refers to the element of *colour* as having "meaning", which "forms response and identity". However, Bowers neglects to point out that the truth behind this theory may be discovered on a sliding scale for each principle, depending on their logical function within the design. In addition, Bowers perceives colour as culturally significant:

> Although humans perceive color interactions similarly, we each have different interpretations of their meanings. [T]o use color meaningfully and effectively, it is important to be aware that color carries connotations. [S]ome colors carry similar meanings across cultures. Red, for example, connotes danger in most cultures. Death and morning, for example, are associated with the color black in the West but the color white in China (Bowers, 64).

It is important to note that it is the astute designer who perceives all of the principles of design as having meaning which, although culturally sensitive, embodies visual communication and empowers the use of design elements.

When determining a design, it may be necessary to use elements and principles in an explicit manner to draw critical attention to desired areas within the structure, generally referred to as the focal point. Although similar in their effectiveness for creating design, not all elements and principles are assigned equal value for any project. If there is a segment of the design which demands critical attention, which is generally the case, the design properties should be used in a hierarchical manner. Bowers describes design hierarchy as:

> Attention can be used through the use of hierarchy, in which some components or ideas stand out before others when arranged in dominant and subordinate areas. [H]ierarchy can make a composition more active and engaging, and aid the viewer in discerning which elements belong together. When some elements are presented over others, it is easier to understand the whole form and its function (Bowers, 74).

Contrary to the common practice (at least in photography) of creating a focal point, it has been suggested that it may not always be necessary, from a design standpoint, to even have a focal point. Lauer and Pentak believe that the use of focal point may not always be sensible, and may end up convoluting the design's function. They note:

> Absence of focal point: Definite focal point is not a necessity in creating a successful design. [A]n artist may wish to emphasis the entire surface of a composition over any individual elements. [I]n Andy Warhol's painting [of soup cans] there are a hundred repetitions of precisely the same image with no change, no contrast, and no point of emphasis" (Lauer & Pentak, 56).

Nevertheless, it may be possible to consider, then, from a design perspective, that the "point of emphasis" is in fact the *whole* rather than its *parts*, as was the case with Warhol's painting of soup cans. In the end, this assigns a focal point, that being the *whole*.

Having examined the critique of qualifying design, whether it is accomplished numerically or abstractly, without an effective look at how it is perfected, meaning and value remain unresponsive. When designers and photographers (the two not being mutually exclusive) can mobilize their emotional reflexes to affectively enhance design elements for a greater visual appeal, then a visual language, which is manifested by emotions, transcends the structural elements of the design. Based on the introduction of this hypothesis, one manner in which an element of design can be understood to personify an emotional response, again, is by the use of *colour*. Lauer and Pentak in their book *Design Basics*, agree with Bowers by describing how emotional colour is used explicitly to express artistic feelings. They argue:

> In a very basic instance, we commonly recognize so-called warm and cool colours. Yellows, oranges, and reds give us an instinctive feeling of warmth and evoke warm, happy, cheerful reactions. Cooler blues and greens are automatically associated with quieter, less outgoing feelings and can express melancholy or depression. [T]he power of color to evoke an emotional response is undeniable (Lauer & Pentak, 258).

It is the emotional "response" that Lauer and Pentak refer to which photographers need to discern and direct to effectively give the picture's viewer a place to stand when determining their own response to the picture being viewed.

In-Camera and On-Camera Design

It may come as a surprise to some academics and visual artists that there are similarities between *Reflective Practice* and the process of photographic design. In reflective practice, it is commonly accepted that there are (at least) two basic types of reflection, *in-action* and *on-action*, in which the former denotes an immediate response to an event, and the latter, which occurs some days after, evokes a more substantive and pronounced response.

There is also a balance that is created between these events that is discovered in the process. It is possible to seek recovery and meaning of an event by interpreting it in the present. Consequently, our reflexive sense of value emerges out of practices empowered by these experiences and interpretations. This is not to say that reflection is an arbitrary process; it is a process which involves conscious and subconscious indices of value that construct human signals. "By accepting the empirical analytical understanding of how knowledge provides those who accept it with a window to reality, and accurate reflections of the real, designers who becomes conscious of these human signals become evermore aware of whom they are" (Norman, 2004). From a design standpoint, photographers intuitively apply similar responsive techniques which affectively evoke a unique representation of a subject. Similar to reflective practice, this should involve a two staged process of *in-camera and on-camera* design, or from an epistemological perspective, cognitive and affective design—knowledge and value.

As earlier stated, when photographing a subject that has its design elements already in place, like a landscape or cityscape, the well trained photographer will interpret most of the subject's design elements at the point of image capture; thereby, utilizing *in-camera* editing or design. This technique involves identifying all of the intended elements for a pleasing composition, not to mention the use of exposure techniques that establish the desired illumination for the scene—light is an element of design. However, when working in an uncontrolled environment, like outdoors or situations that cannot always be controlled by the photographer, it is often necessary to utilize *on-camera* design techniques that involve post-production editing, or digital enhancements, which are accomplished after the initial image capture.

It is essential to delineate between digital enhancements and digital manipulation within the proper context. Digital enhancements involve the use of post-process electronic tools which emphasize the principles of design that could not be controlled at the time of image capture, and are intended to reflect the photographer's representation. Digital manipulation, on the other hand, is when the image design is a result of the arbitrary use of technology which, as an abstract function, lacks most of the affective qualities that define artistic practice. What distinguishes creative photographers from pictographic manipulators is that the former see immeasurably more, and see it thoughtfully and precisely. It is, in fact, a state of consciousness that can only be formed within the language of visual communication. This, then, is what digital photography makes possible. Emotions serve in creating layers of awareness, as earlier stated, and those layers begin and end with our reflexive responses. However, in order to visually represent the continuum of awareness, those layers need to be interpreted in various ways. Digital photography enables visual awareness by providing an eclectic array of technological possibilities, as long as those choices are emotionally/creatively stimulated.

The Principle of Emotional Design

Emotional design is comprised of our inner representations, or reflexive responses, of an external reality. Conversely, and to steer clear of design disaster, it is necessary to reflect upon the significant changes of events that create emotions. Then, interconnect emotions with the understanding of empirical analytic design to avoid the inevitable dichotomy of design elements and their principles—we can call this collision avoidance of active design. We now have essential creative design, which comprises of separate, yet unified design properties that dynamically develop the designer’s unique interpretation of an enriched visual experience.

The philosophy of artistic expression should not only interpret the world in various ways—the idea is to transform it by committing to the notion that truth lies along a continuum somewhere between public and private reason, which allow artistic voices to communicate freely and without restraint. Looking at artistic expression from the paradigm of visual communication, emotional design also has a voice. It is a voice that comes from a response to changes in the current state of events, or ideas, from which the design receives its genesis. It is an empirical voice that is reflective, and articulates the artist’s values, which are distinctive. By mobilizing our emotional reflexes which affectively enhance the elements of design for an enriched visual experience, we give voice to our affective products. It is the voice of the visual artist; it is *The Principle of Emotional Design*.

In an effort to bring emotional design into action, a crucial period in Canadian history is brought to the screen by interpreting key events of the War of 1812 in the Niagara Peninsula, as seen through this photographer's affective lens. The American invasion upon the Niagara region left in its wake human suffering and property devastation that could only be described as senseless, at least from a Canadian perspective. An emotional and visual interpretation of the historical events of this period has left me proud of my national heritage, while also leaving me with feelings of anger at man's senseless aggression in the name of envy and jealousy. This was the affective reaction on the part of the American government who felt oppressed by the British, in spite of being a sovereign nation.

Pity and compassion are two emotions the invading American forces neglected to demonstrate when they burned the town of Niagara in 1813 upon leaving it, giving residents only a few hours to evacuate during a snowy December morning. Many of those residents were forced to trek through snow in bare feet with only a few personal items at hand. This action later spawned a reasonable reaction and cluster of emotions by the British in the form of anger, hate, disgust and contempt, which inspired them to later burn the White House during an attack on Washington D.C. Although, not an accurate historical representation, an emotional and Romanticism interpretation is provided in a photographic depiction of this period.

Part Two

The War of 1812: Romanticism Gallery

Prologue

A leisurely stroll along historic Queen Street on a bright sunny morning is always accompanied by the crisp clean air of this Niagara town. Previously the capital of Ontario, Niagara-on-the-Lake, formerly known as Niagara, is a quaint historic landmark filled with boutique shops and accompanied by the aroma of fresh baked pastries that permeates the air throughout this small village. This is a town known to most tourists for its stunning scenery, vintage wines, classical theatre, and surrounded by plentiful fruit orchards.

This is also a town whose origins lie at the heart of Canadian history and is daubed with remnants of a pioneer era gone by. Set along the Niagara River, and high above its banks, stand mighty oaks. These trees provide today's picnickers with much needed shade on a hot summer's afternoon. It was these same oak trees that stood witness to an uneasy aggression between neighbours almost two hundred years ago. That was a time when the British were preoccupied with the Napoleonic Wars in Europe, while President James Madison of the United States was fed up with British arrogance and unfair trade practices. This was a time that would come to be known as the War of 1812.

The tragic consequences of a brutal and senseless war are not readily evident to the day visitor, but Niagara used to be home to a strapping military presence and a bustling shipping port. Above the Niagara River stands Fort George—a military stand post for a British garrison before and during The War of 1812. Up river is nearby Queenston Heights, which was the chosen landing point for an American invasion that would test British and Canadian military readiness to the core. Tucked inside this small rural community is the Laura Secord Homestead—the historic site of the War of 1812 heroine, whose help surely saved the British from suffering a costly defeat at the hands of enemy forces.

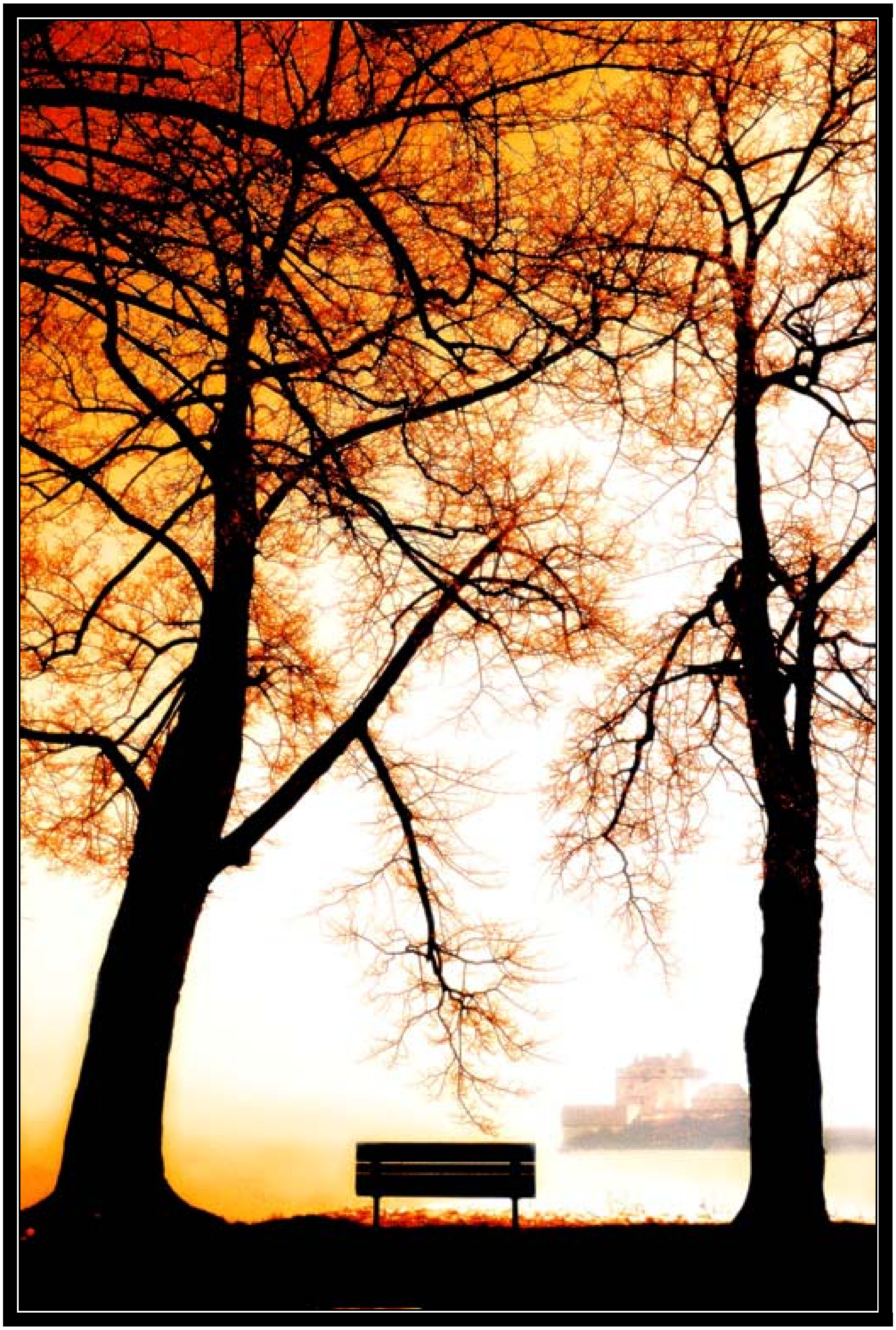
With casualties in excess of 8,000 British and 11,300 Americans, wounded or missing, the War of 1812, motivated by American greed and anxiety, ended much like it started: in deadlock. It was, in fact, the war that once and for all confirmed American Independence and solidified Canadian unification.

The following is a presentation of images that illustrates an empirical and emotional point of view of this bloody and needless confrontation between two neighbouring countries. These visual descriptions are of places and events seen through the eyes of an observer whose artistic representations mirror nineteenth century Romanticism. The Romanticism period of artists reveled in creating landscapes that made inspirational statements of untold stories. Common were scenes filled with mysterious light, vast distances, and human figures, when they appear, which occupy a pensive place (Kalb, P. 2003).

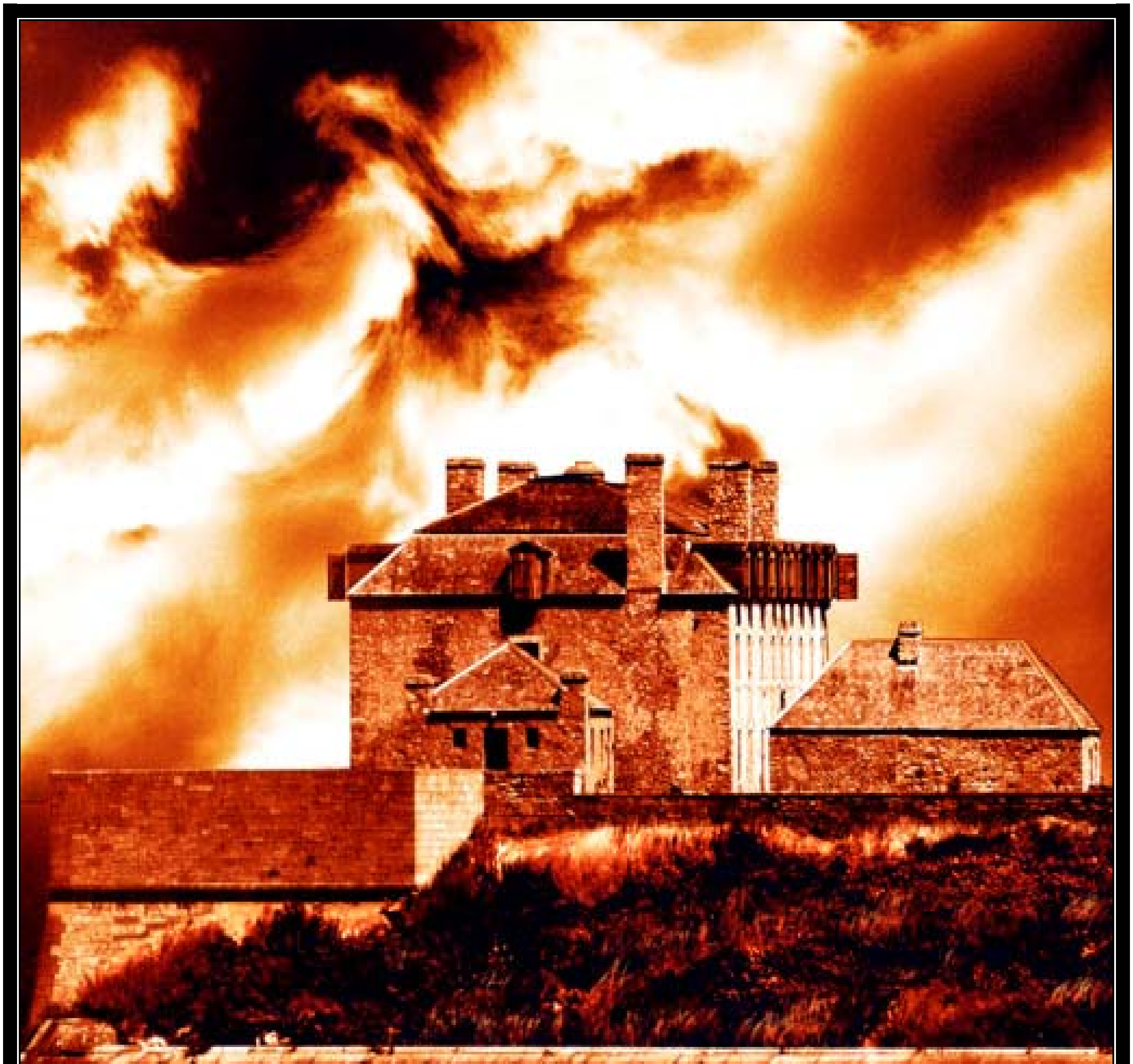
This presentation of photographic imagery is a depiction of the War of 1812's grandest scenes in the Niagara Peninsula. They are created with highly theatrical interpretations whose vibrant colours and dramatic skies translate into spiritual visions of the sublime. The striking approach to form connects with horizontal and vertical perspectives that are complemented by a narrow range of ocher and red hues for a monochromatic design. In addition there is a strong sense of architectural planes, of opposing masses that emerge by way of a series of nearly surrealistic dimensions.

Photographs provide an individual interpretation of the world, both from the perspective of the photographer and the viewer. In stark contrast to photographs of record, these images are a series of emotional representations which omit any sense of storyline and are intended to stimulate visceral feelings which act as metaphors that unfold a dramatic period in Canadian history. This series of forms are intended to yield images that direct the viewer to a specific place within themselves. It is not only an artistic reflection of political disorder and emotional upheaval; it is also a celebration of our life past their deaths.

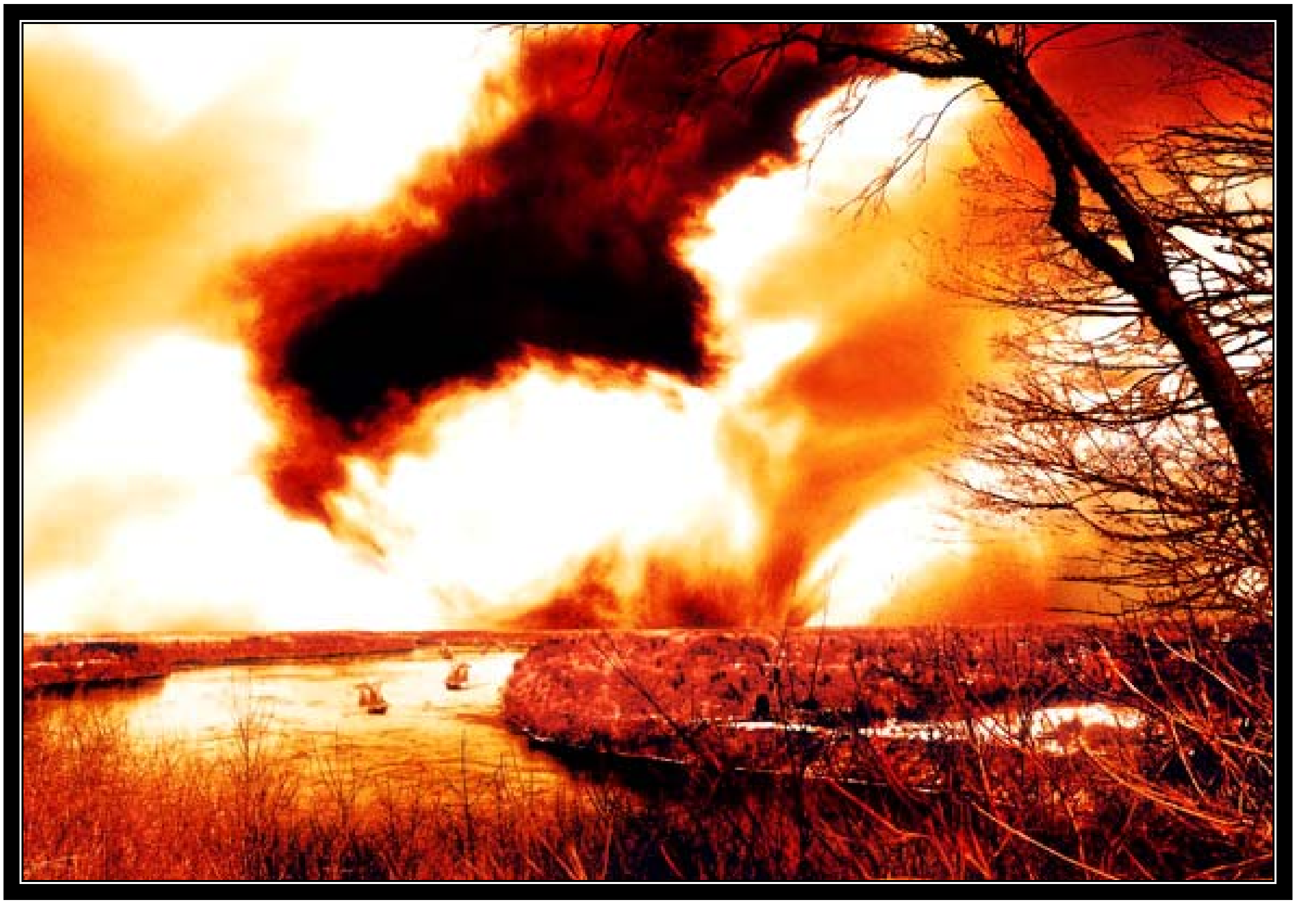
The War of 1812: Romanticism Gallery



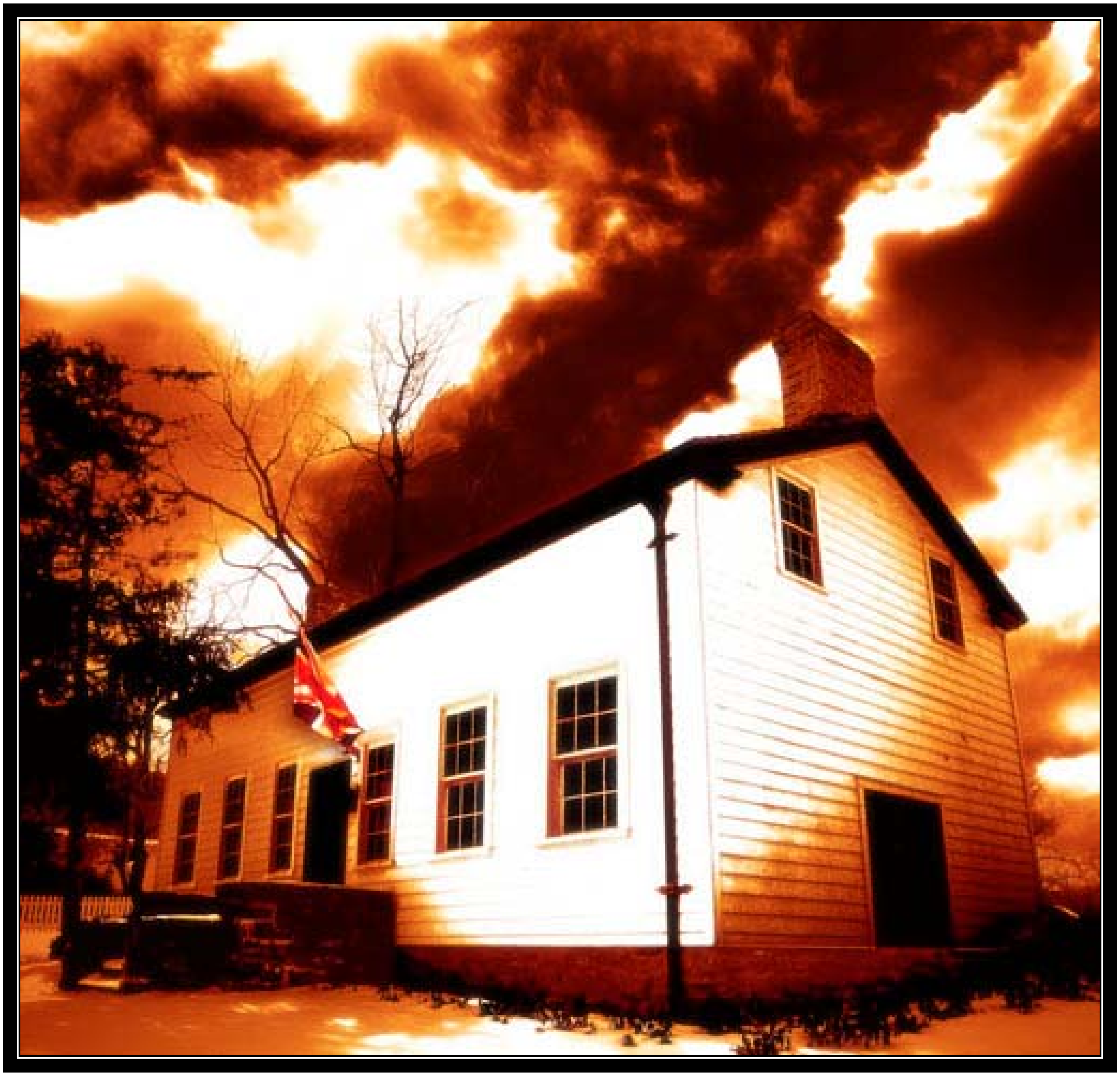
“A Look to the Past: Across Calm Waters”



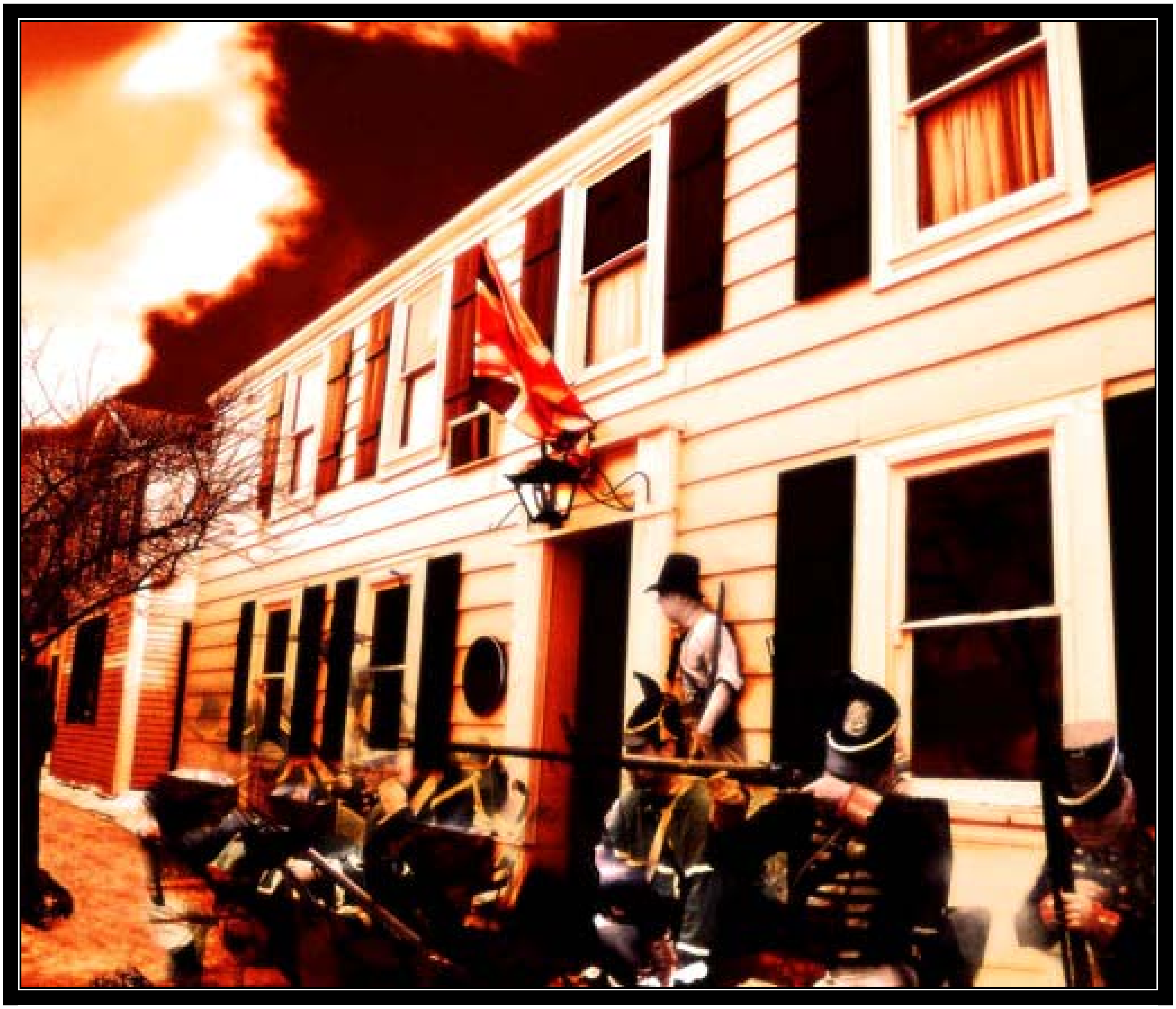
“Fort Niagara: Impending Conflict“



“Niagara Peninsula: Nations at War”



“Secord Homestead: Female Protagonist”



“Niagara Invaded”

“Shaped by History, Tied to Earth”

“Brock’s Monument: Symbol of Power”

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