

The Click! Triangle Photography Festival aims to garner exposure and respect for its chosen medium

By Iza Wojciechowska

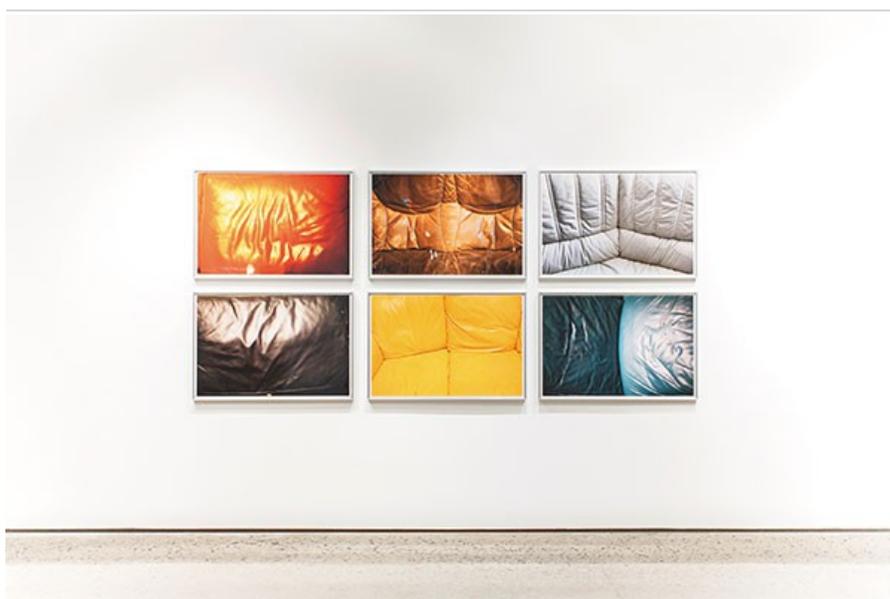


Photo courtesy of the artist/21c Museum Hotels.

Archival inkjet prints by Harrison Haynes: "Oran Mor / Pointe Ephemere / Feierwerk / Button Factory / Trix Centrum / Subterranean" (2012).

Hurricane Joaquin put a damper on the opening of the fourth **Click! Triangle Photography Festival**.

Because of the heavy rain, what was supposed to be an outdoor kickoff party with food trucks and a photo exhibit projected on the wall at the Cordoba Center for the Arts had to be moved, at the last minute, to The Carrack Modern Art, which led to sparse attendance. But Ponysaurus was still pouring free beer, and the projection project—featuring provocative photos of vocal cords, meowing cats and beautiful Cuban vistas—was thought-provoking, even on a pull-down screen instead of under the stars.

As the skies clear, there's still plenty of promise left for the monthlong celebration of the photographic arts, which spreads more than 70 exhibits and events through 40 venues across the Triangle. A wide variety of displays (from fine art to experimental to high-school photography), workshops, portfolio reviews, pop-up shows, museum tours and artist talks on subjects such as tintypes and portraiture courts serious photographers and the curious alike.

"There are only two days in October without some photo-related event, and there are a lot of ways to participate," says local photographer **Bryce Lankard**, one of the festival's coordinators. In 2012, Lankard co-founded it with **Barbara Tyroler**, a Chapel Hill photographer, under the moniker **FRANK:infocus**. At the time, it revolved around FRANK Gallery in Chapel Hill.



Photo courtesy of SPECTRE Arts

Installation view of *Neo-Pre-Post-Contra-Para-Anti-Hyper-Pro-Trans-Ultra-Photography*, curated by elin o'Hara slavick at SPECTRE Arts.

Over the next few years, the festival expanded in area, duration and ambition, and went through some structural changes. Co-founder Frank Konhaus, co-director of last year's festival, left to focus on his own projects, though his company, Kontek, remains a major sponsor. This year, each city and town has its own programming organizer. [Disclosure: *INDY* contributor Chris Vitiello is the area coordinator for Durham.]

According to its organizers, the festival is emerging stronger than ever. This year features twice as many workshops and participants as last year, and organizers expect attendance to exceed last year's crowds of roughly one thousand, at a time when photography may well be ready for its close-up.

"In the past 20 years, I've seen an explosion of photography and the unlimited ways that medium is used: as an expression of art, a documentary mode or accessible to everyone on Instagram," says Lankard. "As a culture, we have a very high visual literacy, and I really believe photography is the most important medium out there."

"Photography is ubiquitous: Everybody takes pictures; everybody loves pictures," says Tyrler. "This festival is about celebrating community and using photography and the arts to do that. Every year there's something new, which is really so exciting."



Photo courtesy of SPECTRE Arts

Installation view of *Neo-Pre-Post-Contra-Para-Anti-Hyper-Pro-Trans-Ultra-Photography*, curated by elin o'Hara

slavick at SPECTRE Arts.

In essence, Click! is about education and, in multiple senses, exposure. This is important in an area where some photographers feel their art is taken for granted.

"Photography is the most underappreciated and most influential contemporary art," says Roylee Duvall, director of **Through This Lens**, a photography gallery in Durham that is participating in the festival. "This community responds in a lukewarm way to photography, [but] Click! makes it somewhat more accessible to those with even a small interest in learning."

Tyroler also has high hopes that the festival can bring more Triangle residents around to photography as an art form. She would like to see the medium become as respected here as it is in other metroplexes around the country.

"In cities like New York and maybe Washington, photography is celebrated in all the galleries and purchased readily by collectors. In the Triangle, people are a little slow to warm up to it," Tyroler says. "Generally, people here are really excited about abstract paintings and traditional paintings, but I'm not quite sure they've really responded to the unique qualities of photography. But I think this festival just may help change that."

Accordingly, one of the new elements this year is an emphasis on interactive programming that takes art out of the gallery and into outdoor spaces, storytelling events and a community scavenger hunt. And the new portfolio reviews allow photographers at any level to have their work reviewed by industry experts.

"They are a staple at many other photo fests, and we have such a wealth of experience and talent and opportunity that it made sense to try to bring reviews to the Triangle," Lankard says. "After completing the first session, at CAM Raleigh, both reviewers and reviewees commented on how the feedback was priceless."

As the Click! Triangle Photography Festival grows, attracting more sponsors and participants, organizers are thinking about its future.

"We're really looking to next year to keep expanding our programming, pairing the exhibits with lectures and bringing artists in from other areas," says Alicia Lange, director of **SPECTRE Arts** and a budget coordinator for the festival. Organizers hope it will continue to widen its scope and, perhaps, expand into the tech realm to include discussions of cameras and other photo-related gadgets.

But for now, half of this year's festival remains to be enjoyed, and Third Friday in Durham is a perfect chance to see a lot in one go. Catch Sydney Steen's photos of Iceland (The Fruit at 305 S. Dillard St., Oct. 16–Nov. 1); Rob McDonald's signing of his photobook *Carolina Writers at Home* (Bull City Arts Collaborative, Oct. 16); a show featuring the unconventional use of scanners (The Carrack, Oct. 13–24); the opening of Harrison Haynes' *CHANGEOVER* (21c Museum Hotel, Oct. 16) and much more.

"There are so many exhibitions it's astounding," Lankard says. "Just to bop around all of Durham that night would be something."

This article appeared in print with the headline "Smile for the camera"

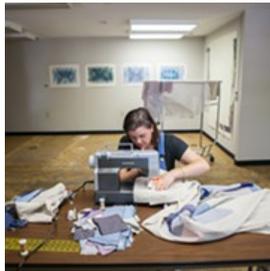
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