

# Minton creates striking images from ordinary

## David Minton

Portfolio Images II: an exhibition of black & white silver prints

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When photographer David Minton decided to turn his favorite hobby into his profession, his work focused on some of the most significant subjects on the East Coast: the Duke Chapel, the Smithsonian Mall in Washington, D.C., city life in New York, and the South campus water tower.

Wait a minute—the water tower? But it's true. In his second show, *Portfolio Images II*, Minton has managed to make effective images out of even the most mundane subjects, such as a warehouse, a metal fence, tree roots, steps, even an apple core. He feels that it's not so much the subject that determines a good photograph. Rather, he looks for prime lighting, shapes and shadows.

All of the portfolio is presented in black and white silver prints, which Minton considers to be a greater challenge than working in color.

"The photographer has only subject and composition, light and shadow," he said. "There is no glitzy palette of contrasting colors to save the image. Light and shadow are the building blocks of the black and white medium."

Although he has done some work in Washington, D.C., and New York City when the time and money were available, he began in Chapel Hill. He graduated from UNC-CH in 1989 with a degree in political science. He worked for the school yearbook, the *Yackety Yack* and *The Daily Tar Heel*, where he was photography editor his senior year.

*Portfolio Images II*, a follow-up to last year's *Portfolio Images*, is an assortment of black and white prints from Minton's favorites over the past

## JENNI SPITZ

### Art

seven years. The pictures, however, were not shot with the intention of being shown as a composite, and that's why Minton calls his show a portfolio. The exhibit does not have a central theme, but photographs are organized in group subjects, such as "Boats on University Lake," or "On the Smithsonian Mall."

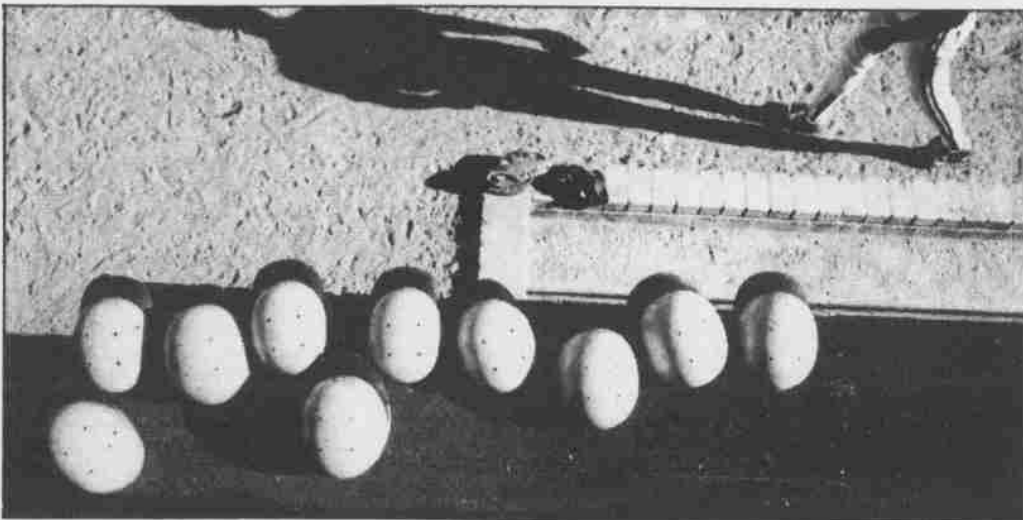
Many of the pictures in the show were taken in Chapel Hill, where Minton has been able to uncover the culture and natural beauty of the town. "Franklin Street Nightlife" (1987) shows a group of barefoot students gathered around an acoustic guitar player outside a local shop. Another, "East Franklin Street - Looking East" (1990), was taken just before Hector's burned down, for it shows the street-corner restaurant and a graffiti board beside it. Both pictures simply and effectively portray the spirit of a college town.

"Five Boats" (1991) is a picture taken on University Lake of, as the title implies, five battered row boats. "Fisherman in Mist" (1989), also taken at the lake, shows a lone fisherman casting a line into misty waters.

Minton's trips to New York and Washington have shown him that urban backdrops provide a large variety of new subjects which are far removed from a small town like Chapel Hill. The portfolio pictures from this setting are surreal images of harsh shadows and commuters blurred in motion, such as in "Couple on Mall" (1992), in which a blurry couple walks down the empty Smithsonian Mall, a barren foreground, and the Washington Monument rises through a foggy background.

Even though Minton enjoys taking pictures in an urban setting, he finds it easier to produce and present his work in Chapel Hill. "I like to travel to make images," he said, "but come back home to work with them."

Minton prefers finding out-of-the-ordinary ways to present his subjects. His use of wide-angle lenses modifies perspective and depth-of-field. Re-



David Minton's 'Batting Helmets, Boshamer Stadium' (1986)

cently, he has been working with different time exposures in an attempt to record the movements of people and the environment.

"This technique hopefully will allow me to record the fourth dimension — time — in the two-dimensional medium of photography," Minton said.

Although he often seeks conventional subjects, Minton also concentrates on simple geometric shapes and their related shadows. An example of this is found in one of Minton's favorite pieces, "Batting Helmets, Boshamer Stadium" (1986). The picture is a view from above nine helmets sitting atop the dugout and the elongated shadow of a player, which offers sharp contrast to the picture's bright lighting.

"It's from a time I let neither skill or technique interfere with my efforts," he said of the photo, "yet still produced a piece I find little fault in."

Minton emphasizes technique and shadow. He will not shoot any sub-

ject until lighting and background are optimal. His picture, "Steps," taken in Southampton, N.Y., in 1988, does not even show actual steps. Instead, it is a picture of their shadow on a brick wall. This pinpoints the stark geometry of the step's structure, and presents an ordinary subject in an extraordinary aspect.

Another photograph entitled "Bryan Center Window, Duke University" (1991), uses shadow to create depth. Its subject is a man seated in a chair, his back to the camera, with a large plant beside him. Such simplicity allows the lighting to make its own statement, pronouncing the shadows.

Minton's current project, a documentary on life in East Coast subway systems, is an attempt to capture the feeling of life underground in major cities. In the upcoming months, Minton plans to travel to Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston and Philadelphia to contrast and compare life in six major cities. He hopes to present this

show by the end of next year.

Minton would not be the first to say that his work is art. "I took the pictures," he said, "so, it would be pretty egotistical for me to say that what I created is an art form. That's for others to interpret."

But photography remains fulfilling for him, because he is able to produce something from which he can get immediate feedback and reach a wide audience.

"I am the master of what I create," he said, "limited only by my tools and my imagination."

Minton's sense of innovation ensures he is not soon to run out of either.

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