

Reviews of Jeffery Beam's Photography:



I have to admit that my first reaction to Jeffery Beam's Italian photographs was an unbecoming stab of peevish jealousy. Do I try to be a poet? A troubadour? No! (And a good thing too.) But it didn't take many seconds to succumb to the unambiguous pleasure of seeing a place I love through Jeffery's eyes. These images are very like his poems: assured, accomplished, delicate. They enlist all the senses. I have one that transports me so completely that I hear church bells every time I look at it. For me, poems and photographs have a strong connection, something to do with distillation. I think something really fine could happen with Jeffery's photography in tandem with his writing. It is a dance I want to see and music I want to hear. So I am writing this letter for entirely selfish reasons, and I hope the Council can enable this work to happen.

—Photographer **Elizabeth Matheson's** recommendation letter to a granting body, August 2009

Jeffery Beam is as much a visual artist as he is a literary one. As is too often the case with writers who also paint and painters who also write, the world knows only one half of his art – his meditative, gemlike poetry. The ... grant would support and celebrate Jeffery's less known but evocative visual work, photographs taken both close to home and far afield, fresh and mysterious images interpreted by a poet's eye, composed with a designer's hand. To know Jeffery as I have for 20 years is to know a person with the most sublime sense of beauty and design imaginable. That his photographs are arresting is immediately evident. When he first showed me pictures he had taken of cloisters in Italy, elongated images that captured a great sense of movement, human and earthly, I was breathless. Many of his pictures carry a hauntingly reverent mood, exalted and accessible, sweeping spaces and intimate corners, all gathered, edited and shaped by a primal yearning. Then there was the night we gathered for dinner and he produced right then and there delightful drawings of faces at the table. This, too, is a talent, swift and spontaneous, that brings us the vigor of life itself. An incandescent man, artist, friend, I applaud his gifts. They are numerous and glorious. They make the world a better and more interesting place.

—Artist and writer **Ippy Patterson's** recommendation letter to a granting body, September 2009

From reviews of *Daedalus Landed Here: Poetic Views—Earthly Travels: photographs, texts, and poems from travels in Italy and Southern France (October-November 2006)* at *Through This Lens Gallery, Durham, NC*:

Viewing Jeffery Beam's "*Daedalus Landed Here: Poetic Views - Earthy Travels*" is a little like taking a crash course in art, creative writing, European history, and the wisdom of the ancients, except classes were never this interesting. Pairing beautiful photographs with exquisite poems and narratives rich with historical and personal feelings, Beam guides us through 30 years of travels in Italy and France- through ancient towns, gardens, churches, and countryside. Viewed together, they recount a story—each photograph unique and significant about that place; that moment in time. Beam has frequently collaborated with other artists in his works, but this time he collaborates with himself. An accomplished Hillsborough-based writer, he has turned to re-visioning with the camera's eye what his soul translates through his pen. In this case, the subject is his travel. He explains, "Steven Forrest, the astrologer, once told me in a reading that my work and my spiritual development would grow most through travel. His perception has proven true, and although I don't get to travel much, when I do, I take it as an opportunity to absorb as much scholarship and visual inspiration as I can."

—**Through This Lens Gallery**

Not What It Seems—photographs and poems (Through This Lens Gallery, April 24 – June 19, 2010):

So good to see your pictures at Duvie hall. They were the images of a poet, their phrasing beautiful and quiet. Like pictures that can listen.

—Artist **Ippy Patterson**

Jeffery Beam's photographs offer a different experience, hinging more on metaphor than abstraction. Accompanying his pictures are selections from his poetry, many of which are about seeing and contain some vibrant images, is in this couplet from "The Longing:"

One yellow leaf fell
One gold finch startled

Both the poems and the pictures compel us to observe and contemplate the commonplace, the things around us that are so often overlooked in passing, not seen for what subtlety they contain.

Yet to capture our attention, Beam's door is not an ordinary door, but a door nonetheless. In the title photograph, "Not What it Seems," a door is framed by a congruent arch and set in a long, high wall, all covered with vines of slightly varying shades. And a window is not just a window in "Window of Fire," but one through which sunlight seems literally to burn and flow like lava.

The extra-ordinary subjects in Beam's pictures remind us, or perhaps make us aware, that ordinary things are not ordinary. While in his photographs the door or window or stones or snails or pools are uncommon, neither are the multitude of things around us so mundane, if we only look more closely at them. One of the best things that good photographs can do is to show us what a rich visual experience exists all around us, if we take the time to see.

—**Randy Hamilton**, *Durham Photography Examiner* (April 30, 2010)