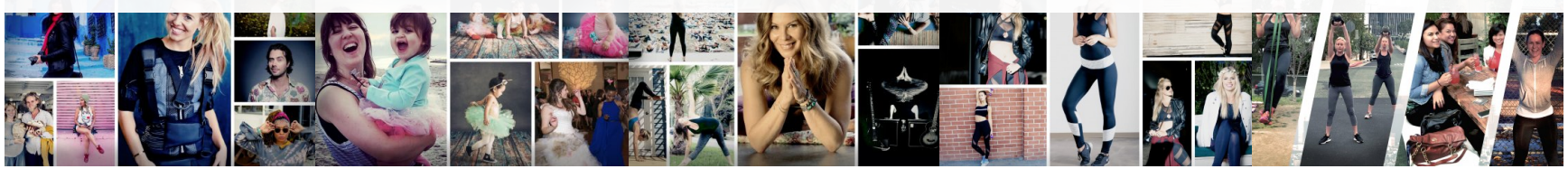


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FEBRUARY 26, 2019

Meet Jenny Okun



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Today we'd like to introduce you to Jenny Okun.

Thanks for sharing your story with us Jenny. So, let's start at the beginning, and we can move on from there.

I grew up in Manhattan and later in Westchester NY. In high school applying for colleges, I was worried about being bored, so I decided to pursue History which seemed to be the hardest route I could take. It was pointed out to me that I was best at art. I knew I would always be an artist so had not considered I needed to choose that path. In high school, I took every art class available and made films, photographs, and paintings.

My first summer job was painting an eighteen by nine-foot mural. That paid for my first camera; a Konica. Ten years later, I bought a Hasselblad at a police auction in

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digital 15 years later in 1994. I

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was convinced by Mac Holbert at Nash Editions that the quality was good enough to convert. He was spot on. I learned how to print looking over his shoulder, and then later I took a color course in the Santa Fe Workshop and felt smart enough to start printing on my own. Manhattan Beach company Nash Editions was started by Graham Nash to print his beautiful photographs of the music world.

After high school I attended three colleges in London; Wimbledon, Chelsea and the Slade for painting and experimental media. I ended up running a photographic department in Chelsea's painting department. When I had my interview I told the committee that I did not like photography, I only liked painting, and they hired me on the spot. I only taught students who had ideas and needed direction technically.

When my photographic editions of architecture started selling in Los Angeles at the Craig Krull Gallery, I quit teaching and went full time as an artist. I made a studio here in LA, while also keeping the one in London. I love both cities and like to work in both of them. I travel to each of the studio's in-between commissions. I bought 24 slide projectors with which I created projected collages on my studio wall. I then photographed the

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This was before Photoshop and computers became an everyday staple for design companies. I did many commercial commissions for London companies using this method. The results were not perfectly crisp, but they were painterly. At first, I thought computers were only good for correcting my spelling. It took the introduction of the Iris printer and archival inks to finally lure me to use the computer to create art. I was totally won over.

The colors of the inkjet inks are so intense, and the ease of using Photoshop far surpassed what I could get out of my Hasselblad and photographic prints. I can travel with my computer, and I can assess how my art is progressing. In the non-digital age, sometimes I had to revisit the architectural site multiple times before getting it right. Instead of 200th of a second, I spend about 30 hours in my studios working on a final image digitally, but this is a fair trade-off for manageability. The painter in me is happy.

I have exhibited my experimental films, charcoal drawings, and photographs internationally. The photographs of architecture sold best in the galleries. I traveled to many countries searching out architectural gems for my shows. I am looking for a building with

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at least six interesting viewpoints
to make my superimpositions.

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Two books of my photographs have been produced by Five Ties Publications. Each demonstrates a different photographic method.

In the end, I think a book will be the surviving way of looking at my art. Books reach more people than an exhibition. My gallery shows usually have ten large-scale framed prints where a book can have a hundred or so images. Some of my images will only be seen in books.

Because of my interest in film-making, I was able to devise a method of superimposing images in sequences of six exposures. They overlap and are superimposed by advancing the film in the camera while taking exposures. This took a lot of planning and sketching beforehand. I had to hold the camera sideways and upside down to get the sequence right in the two $\frac{1}{4}$ square cameras, I adapted. Now, of course, there is Photoshop, and I can take hundreds of detailed camera images and then combine them in layers in the computer. It is a more laborious process but much more satisfying.

I print all my photographs in my L.A. studio on a 44" Epson printer using Somerset Velvet paper. This paper receives the water-based ink and minimally adds blur to the images. This

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suits my painterly sensibility perfectly.

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When I first moved to L.A., I was commissioned by the Getty to photograph the building on their new site by the 405 freeway. Every weekend I donned a hard hat and big clunky boots and spent the days photographing the site by myself. I was on top of the world in the most exciting new space. There were no workmen on site on the weekends, and I had the whole place to myself.

When the museum was complete a triptych photograph of mine was printed for a poster for the bookshop. I signed all 5000 posters along-side Richard Meier signing his poster. It was a marathon. The next commission was photographing The Whitney Museum in NY and the Tate Modern in London My photographs are housed in at least 100 company headquarters, and I have done 60 Corporate Commissions. My artworks have been in 200 shows (one person, group shows and film festivals).

Today, I am still involved with sequences and overlays and have done projections for opera sets. I am working on set projections for an L.A. Opera production with Placido Domingo conducting based on a Woody Allen short story, The Kugelmass Episode. With the same team, I made the projections for the L.A. Opera production of Dulce Rosa which was based on an Isabel Allende

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short story *Una Venganza* | Love
the epic nature of the opera.

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Both opera's were composed by Lee Holdridge.

The largest artwork I made was a 30-minute film-loop back-projected onto a 40'x40' screen behind the band The Brazilian Girls at the Treasure Island Music Festival in San Francisco 2009. That was beyond fun. In the end, I prefer my artworks flat and still so that the viewer can meander freely around the image.

I love living in L.A. Sometimes it is very hard for me to leave my studio. I work in my pajamas and only get dressed if I leave the property. You could lock me in my studio for the rest of my life, and I would have enough projects to work on. Life is a beautiful distraction.

Has it been a smooth road?

Nothing is smooth except one's ambition. My ambition takes me to the heady realm of creating. That said, finding a gallery and a way to support one's ambition is another thing. I taught film-making, painting, color, photography and would give a lecture on any topic which paid well.

Many jobs seemed to take too much out of me like teaching. I would get home after three days in a row teaching, and my husband who is a comedy writer would tell me a joke, and I would burst into tears. It was so exhausting to steer student's

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day.

I was probably a good teacher, but it was not for me. I would also watch Bringing up Baby with Cary Grant and Katherine Hepburn over and over to relax after those three days of teaching. I then discovered doing commercial work was faster and less painful and more lucrative. My commercial phase petered out after Photoshop and computers were being incorporated into design studios.

Fortunately, my artwork was selling in NY and LA by that time, and I settled into my own drift of architectural images. In my career, I have gone through three major recessions during which I had the time to make many artworks. When the economy picks up, and the commissions start coming in again, I am distracted. I still wear jeans and loose shirts, and they have also come into fashion three times in my life.

My husband once asked me did I get married in that outfit. I will not change my lifestyle nor change my art. My marriage to a writer has worked very well as he is in his head most of the time writing, so I am left alone happily.

In terms of struggles, one could say working 400 hours on an opera which pays very little is bad. The upside is I produce

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all works out. One has to judge when to be generous.

Galleries come and go, one's career has shallow points, but nothing can stop the ideas from coming. Sleeping is the hardest part.

We'd love to hear more about what you do.

I work for myself, and I am driven. It is hard to stop and relax. I take a nap every day to rest my eyes around 2:00 p.m. In the morning I wake at 4:00 a.m. I have started to make myself have breakfast before going to the studio. My husband loves to cook, and after dinner, I crash early to bed. I wake in the morning seeing images on the ceiling. I watch them disappear and then know exactly what I need to work on next. My mind wakes instantly, and nothing can keep me in bed except sickness which is so depressing. Six hours of sleep is the max I can handle.

The rush of working on a new image is my call of the wild. I only open mail and emails on Mondays and do the accounts and all the proposals necessary until I am finished. Usually, it is on Wednesday. Then I allow myself the freedom to go to my studio and continue with my artwork. If I think someone needs something, I get distracted and so this routine works best for me. If I am in the middle of a

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necessary as my time is taken and planned for.

My L.A. studio has my big printer, so when I am here, I am feverishly trying to catch up on making prints. It is 2019, and I am just printing images from 2006. When I make a 40 -inch test print in my studio I look for imperfections and then there is the long process of getting the color and separations perfect. In L.A. I listen to books on tape with my eyes closed to relax after a hard day's work. The eyes need a rest.

When I travel, I take my computer and map out new images roughly in layers. I work fast and know the bulk of the work will come later. In London, I dream and plan and visit galleries. It is so important to distance oneself from the safety of the studio. I also write diaries of my travels as I never seem to remember anything that I have not photographed.

How do you think the industry will change over the next decade?

I think with all the images and films on the internet people are still in the honeymoon stage of abstract space on the computer. There is a trend of high-end expensive art still selling. Many artists are not selling in the lower range (three-seven thousand dollars). I hope this is just a

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phase and that there will be a
swing back to buying art for walls

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again.

In the end, publishing a book may be the only avenue left for static images. I see many well-composed photographs on Instagram, and I love looking for places I would like to go to. It is a beautiful tool for visions.

I have never been satisfied with taking a perfect single image. That only seems to relate to what is in front of the camera. My interest lies in the thinking about a subject and the arc my eye travels in and my emotional relationship with the subject.

Pricing:

- 40-inch print, edition of 10, \$3,500
- 70-inch print, edition of 10 \$4,500

Contact Info:

- **Address:** Craig Krull Gallery
2525 Michigan Ave Building
B3 Santa Monica, CA 90404
- **Website:** jennyokun.com; www.craigkrullgallery.com
- **Phone:** 310-828-6410 (Craig Krull Gallery)
- **Email:** info@craigkrullgallery.com,
- **Instagram:** okunjenny

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Image Credit:

L.A. Studio, Gaudi Garden, Barcelona, Downtown LA Orpheum, Los Angeles, Olymbos Chapel, Karpathos, Greece, Gehry Ruvo Center, Las Vegas, Colburn Disney Broad, Los Angeles

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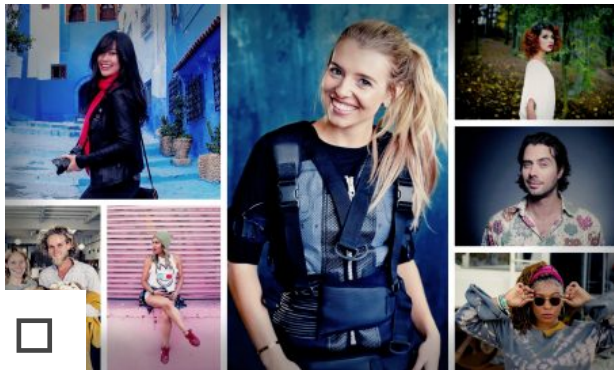
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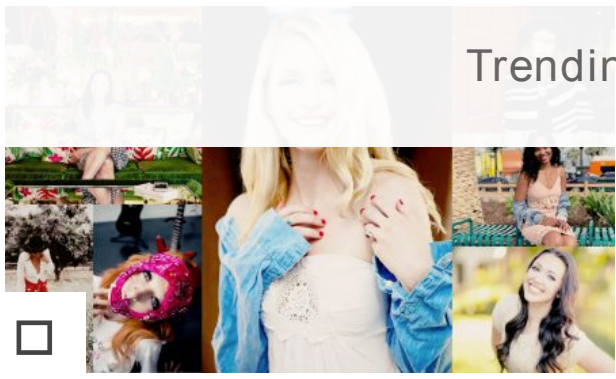
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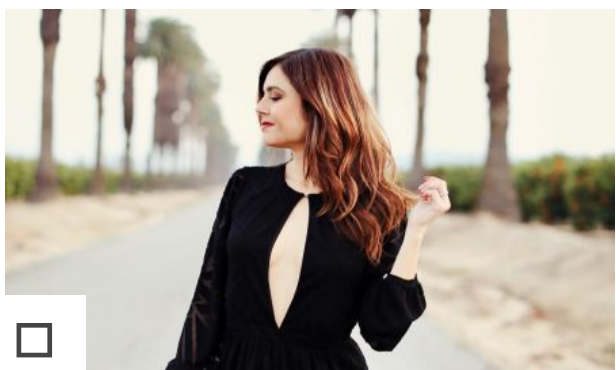
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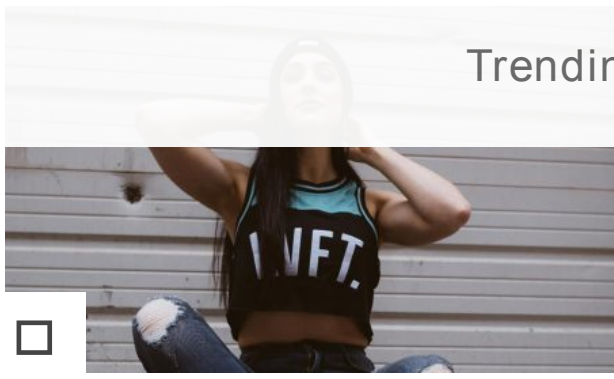
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