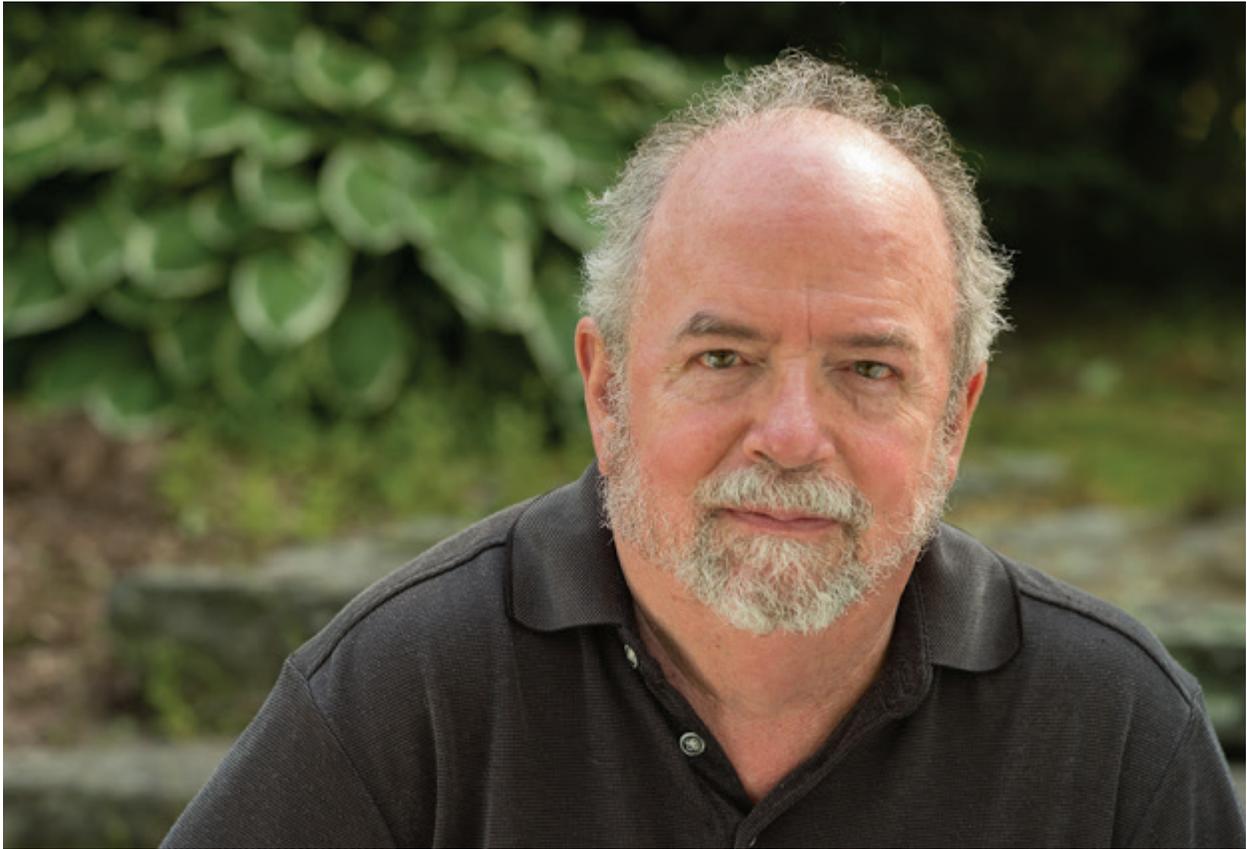


CAA interview with Tom Diaz



Headshot/portrait

This is, essentially, a self-portrait. It was made in the first session of a portrait workshop taught by Joyce Tenneson. I set it up, and my friend, photographer Ed Friedman, hit the shutter button. I don't have a picture of my workspace, which is distributed around the house. I edit my pictures on a 2015 aluminum MacBook Pro, usually while relaxing on a couch in the house. The laptop goes with me when I travel, so I can edit a day's pictures the same evening. I print on a digital pigment ink printer, currently an Epson P600, which sits on a horizontal surface elsewhere in the house—currently in the master bedroom.

What is your creative process?

I usually take one or two cameras (one normal one and one infrared camera) any time I go out, especially in the city or in other locales where there will be people going about their business—that is, people who are where they belong, as opposed to tourists in tourist areas. All my pictures are unstaged, candid, and unposed, almost always featuring people who are strangers. I usually have about 30 to 50 pictures after a day. That may be a pace formed by shooting one or two rolls of 35mm film back in the film days. I edit the pictures at the end of the day, tagging the few I think have any kind of exhibition potential. Some strike me as outstanding right away and get fully processed and printed. Others, I go back to later if I am arranging a show or submission to a show, with a particular theme.



The Count, 2011

This person was photographed at the Korean War memorial in Washington, in the summer of 2011. I was close, shooting with a 50mm lens.

How do you choose your subject matter? Is there a reoccurring theme that carries throughout your work?

My style has developed in an iterative way, as I go through these shooting sessions. I look for striking human gestures that have important relationships to the buildings and other shapes in the frame. The more definitive the human gestures seem to be, the better. I particularly like photographs that have that kind of “definitive” feeling but which also have an enigmatic nature. If a viewer is attracted to the image as it is but then wonders “what’s actually going on here,” I’m especially pleased.



Johnny's, 2007

My wife and I were eating lunch in a diner on Christmas Eve Day, 2007. She reached out to stir her coffee. "Wait! Wait!" I begged. Exposure was 1/6000 s at f/1.0. The light was blasting in the window and right through the tumbler. Juror's Choice in the 2008 Cambridge Art Association Show Interiors/Exteriors.

In your opinion, what's your best/favorite piece you've made?

One of my favorite pictures is *The Count*, taken in Washington, D.C. in 2011. The person in the picture, oblivious of me and other people present, was bustling around officiously, indicating and apparently counting something I could not see, and making notes on a pad. The depth in the picture, the gesture, and the question of what the person is actually doing all add up for me. It is one that I knew at that moment would be a winner, by my standards.



The Body Builders, 2014

This was one of the first satisfactory pictures in the project called "The Clear Light," which I have been working on for a couple of years. (Another is The Muster, the photography prize winner in this year's National Prize Show of the Cambridge Art Association.) The photographs are mostly shot with infrared equipment. This one was at North Point Park in Cambridge, Massachusetts, at high noon. One of the benefits of infrared photography is the ability to get a range of interesting tones even in the flat, glaring light of an overhead sun. The title gives away the otherwise enigmatic fact: The young man making the curved shape is a body builder waving huge cables in the air. The picture was featured in the 2015 Community of Artists show at the Danforth Art museum.

What is one of your artistic goals for 2016?

My main goal for the balance of 2016 is to get acquainted with the fine arts community in Santa Fe.

What living artists are you inspired by?

Jay Maisel, one of the pioneers of fine art color photography, stands out in my mind. I find his pictures inspirational, and he is a tough but on-target critic.



The New York Worker, 2009

This one, I knew immediately, would succeed for me. I came around a corner while walking through Chinatown/Little Italy in New York and there was this guy being blasted by late-afternoon sunlight. I quickly took a short series of three or four exposures. This is the one where the knife was just right. Let's see now: the guy is using a very sharp knife to slit open bags of coconuts. And there's a saw which, evidently, saws them. Why he is doing that, I cannot say. Featured in the show Red, Cambridge Art Association, 2012.

Do you own any art by other artists?

I own photographs by Brad Lowell and Ed Friedman, silkscreens by Will Barnet, and a painting by Heidi Whitman.

Do you have any shows coming up?

I have a picture in the 15th National Prize Show of the Cambridge Art Association. I don't currently have other shows coming up but hope to start participating in the Santa Fe arts community this year.



The Prayer, 2003

This is one of my most popular pictures and a personal favorite. It was very challenging to shoot, taken at dawn on a boat floating on the Ganges River, with a fairly slow 200mm lens and ISO 400 film. It was hard to edit, process, print, and appreciate, so definitely not one where I said "I got it!" at the moment.

Website: tomdiazphotography.com