

# KNOXVILLE

# *Style*

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## Glamour Girls

CELEBRATING WOMEN, CULTURE & COMMUNITY

# It's A Matter of Time

## Patterson connects to our deepest memories

She never picked up a camera until after college, and only then, literally by throwing the phonebook at the wall, did she land her first professional job after the section for local photo labs fell open by chance. After that, well, lucky for us, she had found her life's work.

Christine Patterson, a fine art photographer who makes her home in Knoxville, has delivered some of her most evocative work in a current exhibit "Traces of Time" at Bennett Galleries. Upon meeting her, you'll realize that it isn't just about the technical expertise of the photographs anymore, but her emotional connection to the images as well.

"I absorbed everything while at Thompson's [Photo], I learned how to sell cameras which I knew nothing about."

"I even flunked the take home test they gave!" she adds, laughing good naturedly at herself.

Patterson learned all about portrait and medical photography while interacting with many of the local photographers who were customers at the venerable store. Her affinity for photography continued through her work at Whittle Communications (where she met her husband,) and to opening a portrait studio specializing in the technique of handcoloring.

In 1996 her traveling exhibition entitled "Echoes and Images of Tennessee's Past" would lead her to publish a selection of thirty-six of the original 60 hand-colored, black-and-white photographs from the exhibit.

"Haunting Memories: Echoes and Images of Tennessee's Past" was the book published by the University of Tennessee Press and was defined in Photographer's Forum magazine as "portraying vanishing rural and small towns around the state ... and stemmed from her success on a previous exhibit "200 Years/200 Miles" which featured photographs taken within a 200 radius of Knoxville.

"I would go out every weekend to out of the way places, down every country road, to find places that were forgotten and just take photos," she says. "I've been to every county in the state because of that project."

Creative people in their youth tend to gravitate towards the big city, leaving for the excitement and perceived opportunities that abound, and she was no different. But Patterson had a conversation with her grandmother, Bessie Mae, which changed her focus.

"She said, 'look in your own backyard before heading off to New York' and she was right. There's so much here to explore," she states. "I love being the storyteller, catching things before they are gone."

To Patterson, photography is an art somewhere in its middle age.

"Painting is now the old man and photography was nipping on the heels of the impressionist [painters]. It's only now coming into appreciation as an art form."



**"I love being the storyteller, catching things before they are gone."**

And for those who would argue that it still isn't an art, Patterson says, "it's painting in light, that's what photography means." She likens it to a dream and you're pulled into an exact scene.

Patterson uses infrared film that is "really greedy film." Her photos have a dreamy quality that she has created with the use of Vaseline rubbed on the filter of her lens which gives her images a soft, old fashioned glow that is mystical and supremely artistic all at once.

Her current show features a similar theme of the South Carolina low country full of beaches and gardens and "ordinary moments" that we experience but rarely notice as they pass.

"It was a personally challenging year for me. I took a 'big girl' trip about a year ago, and that started the whole idea."

Patterson uses sand to create the antique and dusky look of her photographs. The rhythms of the ocean, boats, trips to the beach becomes tactile and more substantial with the sand used with the emulsion on glass and wood.

"It's crude and unwashed, organic. Believe it or not, the only sand that worked was from Keowa, S.C. I tried all different kinds but that was it."

Another important aspect of the exhibit is the presentation.

"Sally Huff came across these great old window frames. It completely changed what I had envisioned at the beginning."

Patterson thinks that the windows are the perfect way to demonstrate the theme that these lost views are "windows" to our soul.

"When we look out of windows we aren't always seeing what's really there," she

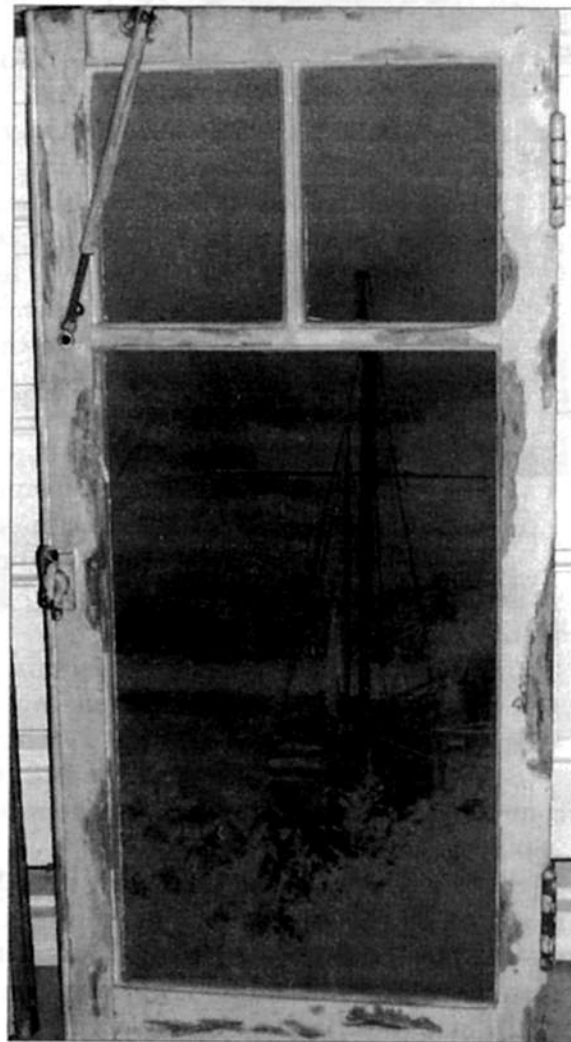
says, her sensitivity to the message always foremost in the message.

"It's frozen in time," another play on the passage of time, like "grains of sand falling through the narrow waist of an hour glass," I read from her exhibit notes.

"The first image is a clock that has stopped and the end is an old, antique door with a set of stairs. Some people might see this as death, others as a door that we are afraid to open." It will be different things to different people she says.

"Time is the one thing you can count on. It keeps going forward."

Catch her exhibit at Bennett Galleries through Saturday, November 29.



I'VE BEEN ON A CALENDAR, BUT NEVER ON TIME  
Marilyn Monroe