



# PHOTOGRAPHING THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

Photographer Journeys Across the World For the Perfect Shot

By Kimberly Horg

**An abandoned fruit shed,** a broken-down rowboat, black railing along a stairway in an old building, and a weather-beaten door can be overlooked by many, but Loomis-area resident and photographer James R. Hirschinger studies the land around him at all times and has

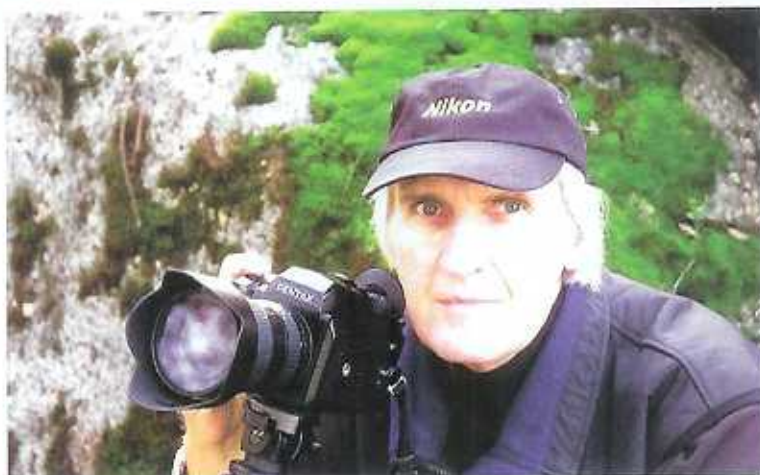
an eye for capturing the story behind the architecture, landscapes and classic automobiles he photographs.

Hirschinger's work is best known for its abstract interpretation of various themes. He has been recognized and honored with many awards, and perma-

nent installations of his work can be found in public buildings, corporate collections and private residences in the Sacramento region as well as in Austria and Switzerland.

"During the last few years, I have received large corporate commissions





for my photographs, which have challenged my creativity," he says. "Art projects in Folsom, Roseville and Sacramento resulted in a series of large-scale photographs, which were installed as permanent exhibits in beautiful new corporate buildings."

Hirschinger got his start as a photographer by entering a photography contest at the Roseville Art Center in 1993. It won best of show, so he decided to pursue photography professionally. His wife of 34 years, Imi Lehmbeck-Hirschinger, also had an impact on him, being an artist who paints aerial landscapes of their journeys across the world. Together, the couple hikes to find the perfect location in which to capture in their work. They have also worked

together on buildings, including the Evergreen Corporation in Folsom.

Hirschinger grew up in a small town in Baraboo, Wisconsin, home of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. After graduating from high school, he decided to venture out into the world. He attended the University of Wisconsin at River Falls, where his interest in sociology led him to travel throughout Europe during his last quarter of college. It was there that he got his first taste of architectural photography. He shot a photo essay comparing East and West Berlin before the removal of the wall.

After graduating from college, he joined the U.S. Peace Corps and worked as a high school teacher in Kingston,

Jamaica. After the Peace Corps, Hirschinger was drawn to working with people and pursued a master's in counseling at Ohio University and then became a counselor at an inner-city college in Newark, New Jersey, for five years. It was during this time that he met his future wife, at one of her art shows in Austria. Soon after that, the couple married and moved to Stockton, California, where they both attended the University of the Pacific. He earned a doctorate in counseling and worked in the student life office while she earned her bachelor's in fine arts.

He was the dean of student services at Sierra College in Rocklin for 16 years, during which time he was responsible for the college counseling program,



## LOCAL ART [ PHOTOGRAPHING THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED ]

health center, residence hall program and the disabled student services program. "The position was a very stimulating and challenging position with a wide variety of student and staff interaction," he says. "Many times, it was difficult to see the results of working with people, so photography became a means for a creative outlet that led to very visible and tangible results."

In 2001, he retired as dean and says he now has the freedom to travel as well as select which projects and advocacy groups he works with. He is heavily involved in the new Blue Line Gallery Design Committee, which Roseville Arts will open on Vernon Street in 2006, and looks forward to exhibiting in this exciting new venue. "All of these experiences have enriched my life and provid-

ed me with valuable perspectives on the world," he says.

Hirschinger looks for dynamic composition in photographs and studies lines and form as well as how they interplay with color. He also carefully considers technical aspects, like depth of field and exposure, to capture rich colors and textures.

This photographer utilizes both digital and film media. According to him,

### Awards

Over the past couple of years, Hirschinger has received special commendation for a photographic corporate art project by the City of Folsom, was named Artist All-Star by KVIE Channel 6 in its Annual Juried Art Auction, and was awarded second place for his Loomis Fruit Shed picture in the Sacramento Fine Arts Center's Annual Photography Exhibit in 2003.

In 2004, he won second place for his "Tower Bridge Reflections" at the KVIE Channel 6 Annual Art Auction Competition; was awarded Critic's Pick in the Sacramento Bee for the photograph "Yellow/Aluminum Abstract #2";

and had an article in the Bee about his photograph "Lugano Stairway," which was taken in Southern Switzerland and also won Best of Show at the Roseville Art Gallery. Last year, this photo was the cover of Perspectives Art Magazine. He also won a merit award and a business award from Williams and Paddon Architects for his picture of a turquoise door on an old building in an artist colony in New Mexico.

He says that so far, he is most proud of being an invited artist at the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento for the 2005 Annual Juried Art Auction and having a major show at the Sacramento Photographic Art Center in Sacramento in 2004.

“ I look for something that is not a stereotypical view. ”



they are two different tools with two different ways of approaching things. Hirschinger says he used black-and-white film in the past, but he likes the use of color, adding that his favorite color is blue, which greatly influences his choice of art.

"I look for something that is not a stereotypical view," he says. "In tourist spots, there are a lot of people taking the same picture, so I like to hike for miles in the backcountry, where hardly anyone else is getting the same photo with the same lighting at that moment."

He likes to mountain bike and kayak with his wife in the Folsom Lake area and hike in the Sierras, particularly in the Mammoth Lakes backcountry. The couple has a second home in Austria, where they like to take advantage of the beautiful surroundings and alpine hiking. In fall of 2006, he plans to do an architectural photo shoot in Vienna, Austria.

Hirschinger is very excited about his next show with his wife, which will be in April 2006 at the 2237 Gallery in the Williams and Paddon Architects building on Douglas Boulevard in Roseville. [www.insideroseville.net](http://www.insideroseville.net)

