${D}$istinctive Image

featuring...

Robert J. Leonard, FPSA, EPSA

Deale, Maryland

Butterfly

The *PSA Journal* continues its *Distinctive Image* series, this time featuring Photographic Society of America (PSA) artist **Robert Leonard, FPSA, EPSA,** who specializes in Stereo (3D) photography and who has created a 3D series of *Neon-like* images. Bob has been a member of the Society since 1976 and currently resides in Deale, Maryland.

A prolific exhibitor, Robert earned his Proficiency Distinction (PPSA) with five stars in the Photojournalism Division (PJD) in 1998 and in 2005 he was awarded the Excellence Distinction (EPSA). Thus far he possesses a Master Stereographer V; 5 stars in PJD; 4 stars in Small Color prints, and 3 stars in Large Color prints and the Color Projected Image Division. In addition to his PSA Distinctions, Bob has also been recognized by the *Federation Internationale de l' Art Photographique* as an *Artiste* (AFIAP). This exhibitor has received over 1800 acceptances and 800 awards in juried competitions and in addition: the prestigious PSA's *Understanding Through Photography Award;* Eastman Kodak's Appreciation for Creative and Technical Excellence; the International Stereoscopic Union's Guy Martin Memorial Award; and many other photographic awards too numerous to mention here.

Robert James Leonard spent 25 years traveling around the world to cover the sport of auto racing for the *Stopwatcher* magazine. He started photographing this exciting sport in 1971 and his auto racing photography has been honored by the Eastman Kodak® Company, and been on exhibit at the Dover Downs International Speedway and the famous Watkins Glen Grand Prix Raceway. The Eastern Motorsports Press Association named Bob their Feature photographer for 1990. While known primary for his sports and 3-dimension stereo photography, he works in all photographic areas and media.

In addition to his sterling record as a photographer, Bob has been a tireless worker on behalf of PSA. For the Stereo Division (SD) from 1986 - 2010 he has served at various times as: Director of *Who's Who in Photography*; 1st Vice Chairman; Chairman; Secretary, and at present, he is Chairman of the *Stereo Image of the Year*. He has been equally active in PJD, serving in various offices from 1993 – 2008: Member and then Chairman of the PJD *Understanding Through Photography Award Committee*; Published Picture of the Year Director, and 2nd Vice Chairman. He has also been Director of the Large Color Print's *Who's Who*. He has served as PSA International Exhibition Chairman for the Stereo section in 1990, 91, 97 and 2006 and for the Small Print Section in 2003, 04 and 2006.

His PSA service record has not gone unnoticed. Bob has received the following Society awards: Stuyvesant Peabody Memorial (1997); Fallon Memorial (1998), and the Keaton Memorial Award (2006). In 2001 he received a PSA Service Medal. Robert was elected an Associate of the Society (APSA) in 1990 and a Fellow (FPSA) in 1996.

This PSAer has also authored over 52 articles on photography. A staunch supporter of the *PSA Journal*, the *Journal* has published 25 of his articles and he has been the recipient of 2 Silver Editorial Stars. In addition, he is a popular writer for the *Journal of the International Stereoscopic Union*, *Stereo World,* and *Dimensions 3*. At various times he has served as Newsletter editor for the Potomac Society of Stereo Photographers (PSSP) and the Bowie Crofton Camera Club.

On the local level Bob is active in the PSA Mid-Atlantic Chapter; ISU; PSSP, and the Bowie-Crofton Camera Club. He is a frequent judge and lecturer and has created numerous slide shows for the purpose of teaching photography.

Of interest, Bob and his brother, developed a *Black Box* for synchronizing stereo cameras. This product was described in the *PSA Journal*, September 1993 issue and *Stereoscopy*, December 1993 and was revised in 2003. The *Black Box* won a Best Product Award at the International Stereoscopic Union's 2003 World Congress in Besancon, France.
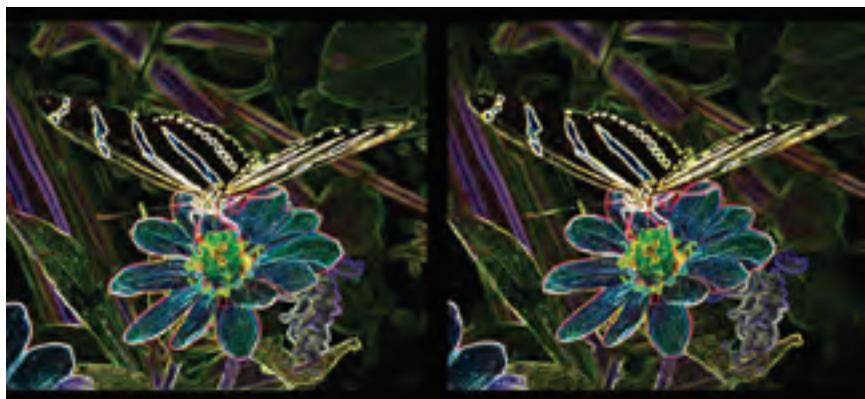
Robert received his Bachelor's Degree in History from George Washington University in 1971 and went on to earn Master degrees in History (1973) and Government (1974) from the University of Maryland. Currently he performs computer/information technology work for TASC, Inc on a contract supporting the modernization of the air traffic control system for the FAA.

1. **Hold the stereo pair at a comfortable, viewing distance, wearing your glasses if you normally wear them.**
2. **The stereo-pair should be approximately in the center of your visual field and evenly illuminated.**
3. **Looking "through" the paper, look to the distance.**
4. **A third image will appear between the left and right pictures.**
5. **Without converging the eyes, slowly focus on the third, center image.**
6. **A 3D picture will emerge.**

Tommy Bahama in neon

Neon Matterhorn

Neon Swallowtail drinking

Mission in neon

Technique

My goal in creating these photographs started with something different. I wanted to create a 3-D image, which when viewed in 2-D had an abstract quality to it, but the viewer did not know quite what the subject was. However, when viewed in 3-D the subject would become very clear. I explored a large number of Photoshop filters used individually or in combination with each other. I found that the Glowing Edges filter gave the *Butterfly* picture the abstract surreal quality I was looking for.

Use of the Glowing Edges filter on other photographs did not produce the abstract quality that I wanted and had obtained with *Butterfly*. But, the photographs did remind me of neon signs as the filter identifies the edges of color and adds a neon-like glow to the edges. I have always liked neon signs and I have two of then in my house. I decided to continue to use glowing edges, not for the abstract quality, but to make a series of "Neon-like" images.

The Glowing Edges filter is simple to use. It has three options: Edge width (values from 1 to 14), Edge brightness (values 0-20) and Smoothness (values 1-15). I start with a fine line by setting the width to 2, the brightness to 8, and smoothness to 6. Most of the time the only option I change is the brightness. I fine the Hue/Saturation adjustment a big help in getting just the right color glow. Other adjustment commands such as levels and curves can be used to fine-tune the look of the photograph.

I have found that this filter works best on well-defined objects like butterflies on flowers, racecars, and even buildings. The application of the filter does not work as well with scenic images, as I think the "neon" glow of a mountain is a foreign concept to us.

Using the filter with a stereo photograph requires that both the left and right image have the same exposure. I use the levels command to fine-tune the two photographs before applying the Glowing Edges filter. Then I use the levels command to make sure that both images are as close as possible to each other in exposure as I can get. It is only then that I combine the two photographs to make a stereo photograph.

Neon Pelican

Mustang neon

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

My goal in photography is to capture a moment in time. To record a subject, an event that quickly becomes lost to history. If a photograph is worth a thousand words, how do I tell the viewer all about what I am seeing at that second, of something that will never happen again?

Most people think recording a subject would apply mostly to a photojournalism image, but the subject really does not matter. It can be a photograph of people, or a scenic image, man made objects or nature's wonders. It can be travel, a studio setup, or pictorial photography. I have to explain to the viewer what is happening and my language is a single photograph. I need to use all the tools that a camera has: highlight the subject or include as much of the surrounding elements as possible (selective focus), tell the time of day (natural lighting or flash), freeze the peak action (fast shutter speed) or let the subject be blurred (slow shutter speed). There are hundreds of ways to take and make a photograph with a camera and then optimize it in the darkroom. And now we have the computer darkroom to give us more and faster tools. The techniques I choose, will tell the viewer what I saw…my story, my impression of that moment in time.

Robert Leonard, FPSA, EPSA