



# Distinctive Image

featuring...

Joseph Hearst, APSA, PPSA  
Danville, California



*Yellow grate*

The *PSA Journal* continues its *Distinctive Image* series, this time featuring Photographic Society of America (PSA) artist **Dr. Joseph Hearst, APSA, PPSA**, who resides in Danville, California. A very accomplished photographer, Joe shares one of his favorite subjects with us, *The Innovative Image*. Joe joined the Society in 1999 and within a short time became well known for his imaginative and novel approach to image taking; finding images that other photographers would ignore. In 2009 Joe earned his Proficiency Distinction (PPSA), accumulating the following star ratings: one star in the Color Projected Image and Electronic Imaging (Monochrome section) Divisions; two stars in the Photo Travel Division; and three stars in EID-Color, and small color prints. Joe competed in international PSA-recognized exhibitions for a few years, and in 2008 was first in North America (and fourth in the world) in Travel Prints in PSA's *Who's Who in Photography*.

Joe, who started taking photos in 1947, is a member of the Livermore Valley Camera Club

and the Contra Costa Camera Club. He is past President of the Northern California Council of Camera Clubs. He administers a study group for the Projected Image Division of the Society, is Director of the PSA Pictorial Print of the Month competition, and past Chair of the Yerba Buena Chapter of PSA.

In 2007 he was elected to the Honor of Associate of PSA (APSA). Sixteen of his articles have been published in the *PSA Journal*, and two portfolios have been published in the British magazine *Digital Photo Art*. In 2009 he received the *Charles Keaton Memorial Award* in recognition of his *Journal* publications. In 2012 he passed the PSA course *Judging and Analysis Beyond the Rules* to improve his judging technique. He made a presentation, *Rust, Rubbish, and Reflections* at the PSA 2008 Annual Conference. He also received the Meritorious Service Award in 2008 and the Commendation Service Award in 2006 from the Pictorial Print Division.

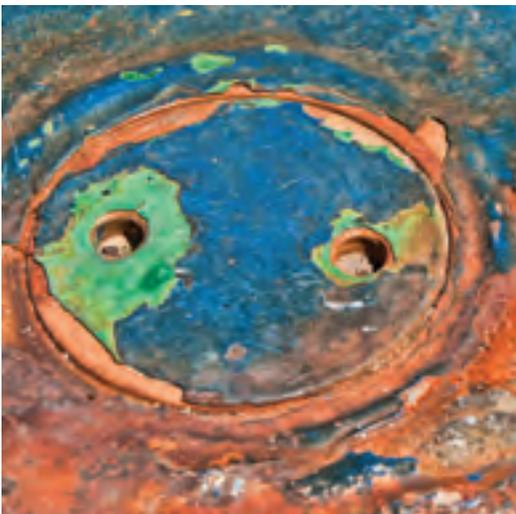
In December 2012 Joe had a one man show

at the Lindsay Dirx Brown Art Gallery in San Ramon, California, depicting how the people of Cuba are able to create a vibrant culture in the ruins of once-magnificent surroundings; how the people of the Luberon, a region of Provence, have preserved the ambiance of their colorful, historic villages; and how the town of Oaxaca, in Mexico, has been kept vibrant while retaining its ancient charm. He also showed the colorful decay of Fort Point, in San Francisco.

Joe is retired from the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory where he worked as a physicist for 35 years. Towards the end of his career he worked mainly in geophysical well logging. He was a founder and past President of the Minerals and Geotechnical Logging Society. He is senior author of the book *Well Logging for Physical Properties*.



Alaska faucet

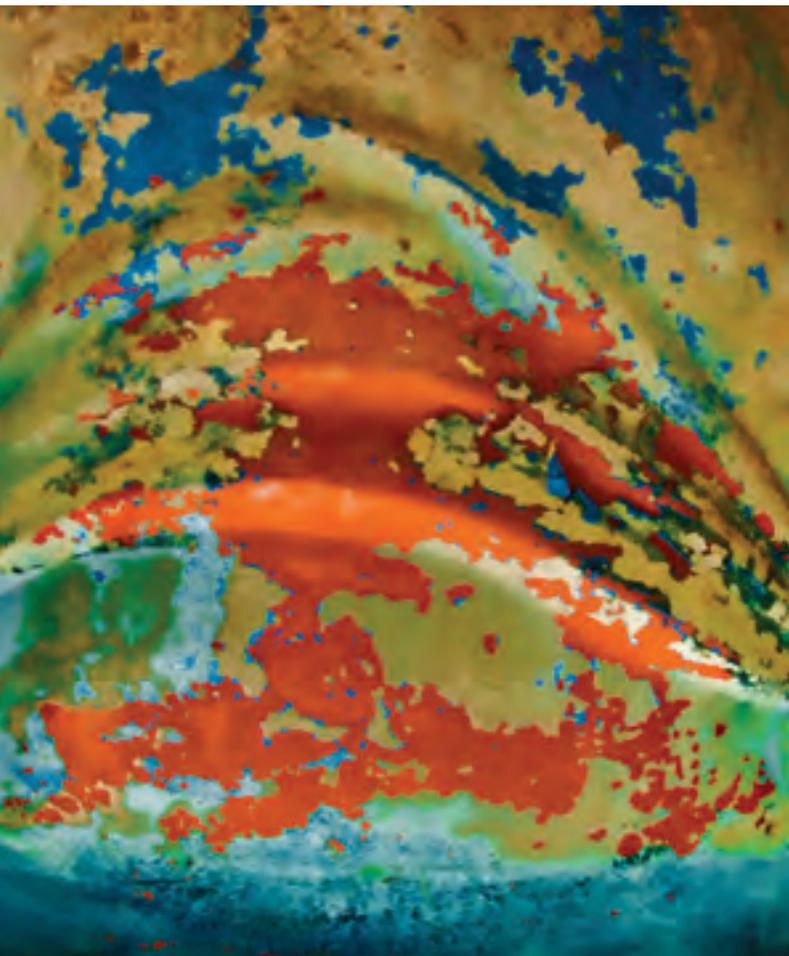
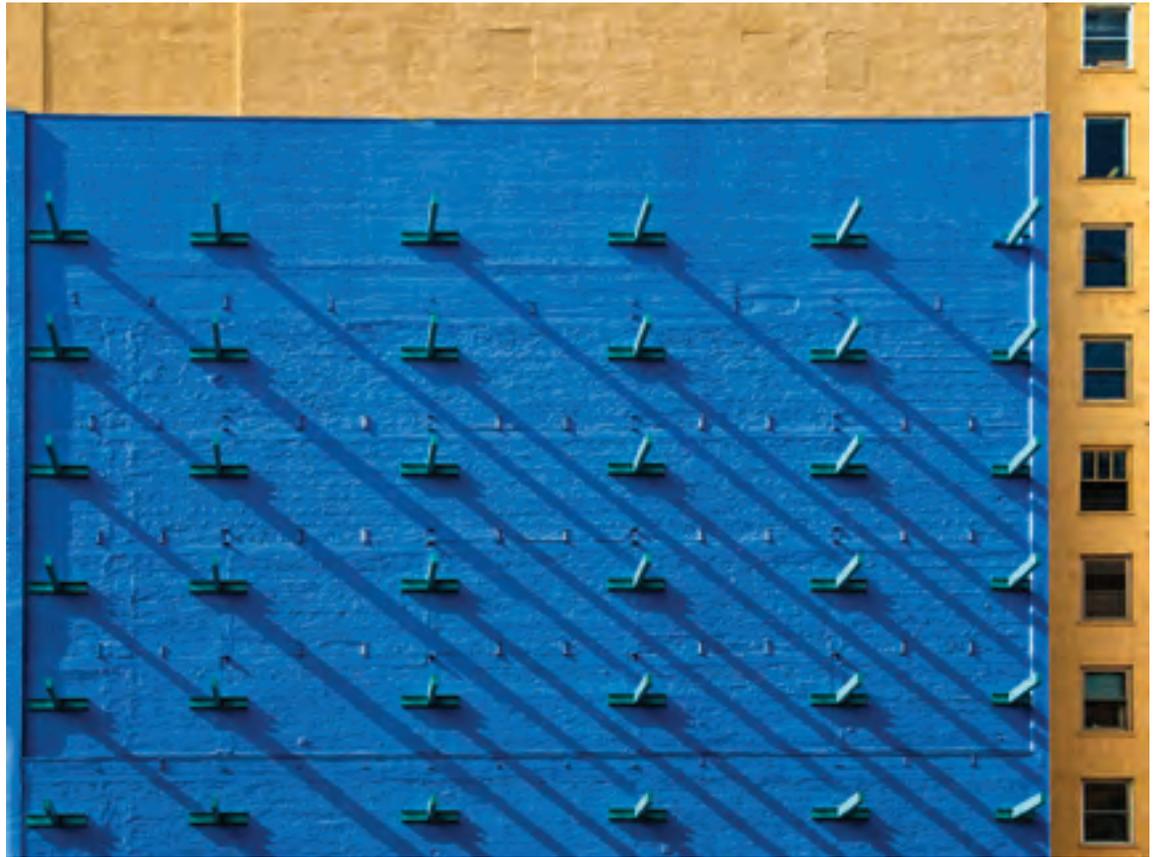


Lid



Sagging house,  
Cuba

*New York shadows*



*Urn, Bishop, California*

## Artist's Statement



I am retired from the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory where I worked as a physicist for 35 years. I started making photos and using the darkroom in about 1947, and after retirement I took up serious photography and joined some camera clubs. When I started in serious photography I went the usual route. I made pictures, took them to my camera club, got critiques, and slowly improved. I photographed the usual subjects, like sunsets, the Golden Gate Bridge, mountain lakes, wildlife, and famous buildings, and accumulated a number of awards.

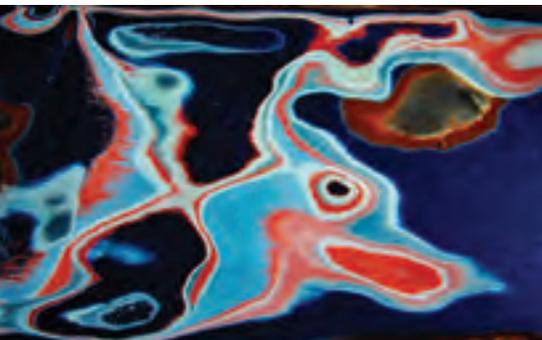
Then one day I went to a talk by the Canadian photographer Richard Martin, and my photographic world changed. He taught me to photograph subjects that most other photographers ignore, like rust spots on junk cars, trash in the street, peeling paint on walls, and unconventional views of unimportant buildings. I learned to love to make images in which the subjects are recognizable and enjoyable, but are less important than the abstract shapes and colors that make them up. What I enjoy the most is finding images that other photographers don't see. I make no attempt to follow the rules; I shoot to please myself. But I must admit I am particularly happy if others tell me that they enjoy my work, or, even more, if they emulate it.



Spout, Oakland



Leaf shadows vertical



Blues, reds and rust

## TECHNIQUE

The first step in creating innovative images is to find exciting subjects in unlikely places and to recognize extraordinary images where others see ordinary objects. To find innovative images, I pay attention to my surroundings. I try to cultivate what **Freeman Patterson, FPSA**, calls “the art of seeing.” He quotes Monet: “In order to see, we must forget the name of the object we are looking at.” If one does that, the composition becomes more important than the object. Patterson goes on: “Your ability to see is not increased by the distance you put between yourself and your home. If you do not see what is all around you every day, what will you see when you go to Tangiers?”

I always carry a camera—that’s easier now with the advent of iPhones. I have trained my eye to look for possible compositions wherever I go, as I walk or drive past things. The interesting objects may be very small—rust spots on the arm of a bench, for example. They may not easily fit a vertical or horizontal format; one may have to rotate the camera. I make a point of looking down—colorful curbs and grates in the street may make good compositions. I look everywhere: light shining through a tumbler on the kitchen windowsill and reflecting on a white counter; a reflecting metal plate in an airport terminal; standpipes on the side of a building; an urn in the doorway of a chain restaurant; shadows of leaves on a colorful wall; even a bag in the street. I was on a landscape workshop in the Palouse and we drove past a decaying combine. I begged the leader to stop and we all got great shots. Another time in the Palouse I saw rusted cars behind a Subway, stopped there and got a picture that, with a little work, became a cover of the *PSA Journal*. On a cruise in Alaska the ship stopped in Petersburg and while most of the passengers went into town I wandered around the harbor and found a lovely rusted faucet. Anything goes.

I also look for buildings that the casual observer might just admire from a distance, but become more exciting when studied through a viewfinder. I can find brightly painted homes, each a different color from its neighbors, in many parts of the world, from my home base of San Francisco to Venice or Oaxaca. Sometimes I can show one colorful building flanked by portions of one or two others of contrasting color, to make it even more interesting. I spent a day in the nearby beach resort of Capitola and found some great reflections in colorful buildings there. It just takes paying attention. While in a taxi in New York I saw some great shadows on a blue building and made the driver stop.

I make a point of going to art galleries and looking at the photos on display there. Generally they would not be accepted in PSA-recognized exhibitions, but they can give me good ideas and also inform my judging.

I find flat light best unless there are interesting shadows that make good compositions in themselves. I carry a close-up filter for small objects. I usually work on the images after I have shot them. I clone out distractions, move objects that don’t look like they are in the right place, and often play with the colors. There are filters for Photoshop that can improve the originals, and I don’t hesitate to use them.

The most important thing of all is to be flexible, and take what the world gives you at the moment. ■