

BERMUDA REDISCOVERED

Exhibit of twenty giclée photographs of Bermuda

Bermuda Society of Arts
July 24, 2009 – August 12, 2009.

Artist's Notes: Eric Somers

A PERSONAL NARRATIVE:

My last name is Somers, the same as Admiral Sir George Somers who founded Bermuda 400 years ago after being shipwrecked on the island. I believe I am related in some way to Sir George (though some of the records going far back are a bit murky). I cannot be a direct descendent, as Sir George never had children of his own, but I might be more directly related to Sir George's brother, John. In any case, I was always brought up to believe that my heritage, on my father's side, leads back to Sir George. The Somers coat of arms has been displayed in my home, and previously in my parent's home, for many years. Though my parents visited Bermuda while I was still in University, I did not visit until very recently.

I live in New York State just North of New York City in what is called the Hudson River Valley. When I was asked to help create a website for the 400th anniversary of the discovery of the Hudson River by Henry Hudson in 1609, that date, 1609, rang a bell in my head. I recalled the books I had read about Sir George Somers and his shipwreck on Bermuda in 1609 and decided that I had to see Bermuda for myself. A local online magazine was helping out with the Hudson River anniversary and said they might be interested in a photo essay about Bermuda, since the two quadricentennials coincide, so I made reservations to visit in March, 2009.

During the week I was in Bermuda I took dozens of images, even though the weather was not always very cooperative and some historic sites were under repair (presumably being prepared for the anniversary summer). In one lovely case the repairs worked for me. During my stay at Aunt Nea's Inn in St. George's Parish, it happened the clock of St. Peter's Anglican Church was being restored and the restorers were also staying at Aunt Nea's. So when I went to the church one day and found the old clock works taken apart and laid out on a brilliant blue plastic sheet, the non-traditional picture, "Clock of St. Peter's Church (deconstructed)" came about. Probably the clock has been photographed thousands of times, but not like this.

Because I came to Bermuda to experience its history, I stayed in the historic town of St. George and all of the images in this collection, except the two taken at the Naval Dockyards, were photographed in St. George's Parish. When first discovering an area this beautiful, it is easy to be taken with everything and snap dozens of shots. Of course, one quickly realizes that many of the shots are of scenes taken many times for postcards and guidebooks. I am hopeful that my perspective may be a little different from those of others who have photographed before me.

MY APPROACH TO PHOTOGRAPHY:

There are two very personal approaches I tend to have in photography. One is a strong interest in minimalism: photographs of very simple forms well defined by color or tonal contrast. The other is based on my strong interest in the Japanese Wabi Sabi aesthetic which celebrates the beauty of natural and organic materials in their complete life cycle, including wear and decay.

My minimalistic bent is evident in the photographs of the blue doorway and the blue window, the green shutter, the red and white stairs, the yellow church and the pink house. In these pictures the simple forms and color are used almost as in abstract painting.

My interest in the beauty of life cycles is especially evident in the door at the victualling yard, the detail of the kiln at the glassworks, the detail of the Deliverance ship replica, the staircase of the lighthouse on St. David's Island, and the yellow door. The lone tree combines both my minimalistic aesthetic with my wabi-sabi appreciation of weathered natural forms.

I treat photography as a design problem and visual adventure. I try to capture arrangements of elements in each image that form a strong composition regardless of their "content" relative to the world outside the photograph. It is not all that important to me that the subject can be recognized. Some of my images come very close to abstract painting.

Some people who have seen this portfolio have asked why there are not pictures of people. Although I did take some photos of people on my trip, my goal here is to show the historic "forms" of the island, not the activities or appearance of current residents. But I will be shooting more pictures of people as I am again in Bermuda for the exhibit, so maybe some day I will also present a portfolio about the very interesting citizens of Bermuda.

BUYING PHOTOGRAPHS

Visitors to this exhibit at the Bermuda Society of Arts (July 24 – August 12, 2009) may directly purchase the framed images on display for \$375 each. Also, unframed photographs, archivally printed on either 17" X 24" or 11" X 17" paper, may be ordered by email from somers@sandbookstudio.com at \$225 and \$120 respectively plus shipping and duty (if any). Please see the PHOTO GALLERY part of the Sandbook Studio website for more information: <http://www.sandbookstudio.com>. Images ordered for mail delivery will be sent, unframed and unmatted, in a mailing tube. Prices subject to change.

BRIEF PROFESSIONAL BIOGRAPHY OF ERIC SOMERS

Eric Somers works professionally as a visual artist and a sound artist and is also an educator in both those areas. He started taking pictures at age eight, started developing and printing black and white images by age 12 and color images by age 15. He has also had a lifelong interest in recording, sound reproduction, and music performance/composition. He started his professional career as a television producer specializing in fine arts programming: classical music and art documentaries. He was fascinated by the combination of sound and image and wrote his MA thesis on a way to show painting effectively on television by coordinating images with sound.

Currently Eric Somers is Professor of Design and Communication in the State University of New York, Dutchess Community College where he teaches courses in photography (traditional and digital), sound recording, electronic music and media studies. He also maintains a digital arts business, The Sandbook Studio.

Mr. Somers also worked in the advertising industry for several years and his advertising and editorial images have appeared throughout the U.S.

Eric Somers is a member of the American Society of Picture Professionals, the Photographic Society of America, the Audio Engineering Society, the Society for Electro-Acoustic Music in the United States and the New York Society for Acoustic Ecology.

TECHNICAL NOTES:

All of the images for this show were taken with two cameras: a Nikon D700 digital single lens reflex and a Canon G9 pocket camera. The Nikon images are more rectangular, having an aspect ratio of 3:2 and the Canon is slightly more square with a 4:3 aspect ratio. Everything seen in the viewfinder is presented in the prints. There is no cropping. All of the images were captured in

Camera RAW mode and printed on Epson Fine Art Velvet paper using an Epson 4880 printer with matte black ink.

These images, which use pigment inks, are far more permanent than any color image printed in a darkroom by a chemical process. Nevertheless, any color image exposed to direct sunlight will fade over time. It is recommended that these images be framed under glass and placed where direct sunlight cannot hit them.

LIST OF IMAGES IN "BERMUDA REDISCOVERED" -- to see the images go to:
<http://www.sandbookstudio.com/Bermuda/>

Red and White Stairs

Deliverance (replica ship)

Deliverance (detail from ship)

Tobacco Bay

House and Gnarled Tree

Bermuda Onion

Clock of St. Peter's Church (deconstructed)

Roof Texture, Aunt Nea's Inn

Blue Door

Blue Window

Green Shutter

Yellow Door

Statue of Sir George Somers

Bermuda Glassworks, Naval Dockyards

Door at Victualling Yard, Naval Dockyards

Yellow Church

Pink House

Lone Tree

Transition

Staircase in St. David's Lighthouse