

Do You See What I See?

Explore the Show

The “Do You See What I See?” online show invites questions about what it means to “see” with and without words. Guests can choose to view the photograph at the same time as the description and poems or they can choose to have the images “hidden”. With images hidden, the viewer can explore multiple verbal options to engage each of the 20 titles. They can “unhide” the photograph after the verbal exploration if they choose.

Although the photographs are positioned in a particular order, you need not follow that order. Feel free to start at the beginning or pick a spot along the path and explore from there.

Whether you choose to hide or show images, you can change your mind at any point from any gallery page. If you hide images by default, you can also opt to show that page’s image individually when you are ready, by using the

History of the Show

“Do You See What I See?” first exhibited as part of the University of Vermont’s Disability Awareness Month in 2006. After living for a decade with ebbs and flows in visual acuity that were deemed “legal blindness”, I began to experiment with digital photography. I playfully shared this self-proclaimed rebellion with the Disability Awareness Month coordinator, Laurel Cameron. She worked her magic to present my show at the UVM Living and Learning Gallery.

The experience of living with legal blindness prompted countless conversations around “how” and “what” I am able to see through my eyes. My sense is people associate “blindness” with “darkness.” They then close

their eyes and try to imagine how I did what I did. Or how they would do anything. I experienced total blindness for a brief time before my detached retinas were surgically reattached and some of my vision returned. It was important for people to know that I saw far more than darkness.

Paradoxically, an unexpected gift unfolded from the inner reflection coming forth in aspects of “Do You See What I See?” I ultimately had the conversation of “how” and “what” I see with myself. I tiptoed into a broader exploration of an essential question, the kind of personal question that is lived rather than answered. I began to ask “What does it mean to see?” I continue to dance with this question today.

The original show contained a total of 20 photographs with accompanying verbal descriptions that were available in Braille, large print, and audio recording. The show was exhibited in several other locations following its debut including at a Vermont Council of the Blind Annual meeting and Candles & Creations in Burlington, Vermont.

Throughout this time, I became increasingly aware that I see with words as well as images particularly as fluctuations in my visual acuity persisted. It seemed natural to add poems to each of the 20 images as yet another doorway of expression and potential understanding. This online exhibit features 20 trios including the photographs, verbal descriptions, and poems all with the same title. I invite you to explore your own questions as you engage with the words and images contained in this show and with the multiple ways they are expressed.

Do You See What I see Titles

[1 Less Traveled](#)

[2 Perspective](#)

[3 Double Take](#)

[4 Trapped](#)

- [5 Tormented by Titles](#)
- [6 Another Angle on the Truth](#)
- [7 Fire](#)
- [8 Reaching Out](#)
- [9 Choice](#)
- [10 Broken is in the Eye of the Beholder](#)
- [11 Everyday Miracles](#)
- [12 Old Friends](#)
- [13 Surrender](#)
- [14 Rest in Wonder](#)
- [15 Illuminated Intricacies](#)
- [16 A Reasonable Accommodation of Spirit](#)
- [17 Trusting the Waves](#)
- [18 Relative Focus on Gratitude](#)
- [19 Gladness](#)
- [20 The Morning's Kindness](#)

1 Less Traveled

A portrait image

A steep rickety, wooden stairway ascends up the side of a grassy hill. At the top of the hill, the grass meets a line of darker green trees in the distance. The image captures the entire length of the stairway but cuts off the top railings as well as some of the stairs and railing on the bottom left. The tall, thin post of the right railing parallels the right edge of the photo and stops just before the top corner. Both of the railings ascend up the hill at seemingly different angles.

The stairs are not solid, the wood separated by space filled with shadows. The tops of individual stairs are most evident near the bottom of the photo where the sunlight catches them squarely. The front edges of the remaining stairs are only visible as distinct lines of shadow. Long horizontal cracks

and weathered lines are vividly evident in the three bottom stairs, the railings and the post.

Tall grass and weeds grow up through the openings between the stairs and around the post. From this angle, some of the weeds seem tall and slender, some appear feathery, and still others seem to have rounded leaves like seedlings. As the stairs climb up the hill, the weeds seem to take over creating a less obvious path for others. Leaving the bottom three stairs, the steps recede into shadow. Daylight and dappled shadows show on the leaves of the green weeds growing up through the stairs.

2 Perspective

A portrait image

A series of multi-dimensional lines connect abstractly throughout the image's foreground. Thick geometric yet asymmetrical bars form a metal structure extending upward toward a single central apex. Haphazardly hanging from the structure, like thin curtains, are flimsy thinner pieces of metal. An occasional sparkle suggests these thinner pieces contain miniature lights.

The background entertains its own distinct patterns and shapes, revealing tall overlapping rectangular buildings. Entire sides of the buildings contain series of tall narrow windows on the right and short wider ones on the left. The upper left quadrant of the photo reveals a dull white sky.

The image is layered and varied. The lines seem to move in all directions creating distortions of depth and dimension. The eyes, overwhelmed by confusion and intrigue, try to navigate the compilation of lines and shapes before them.

3 Double Take

A portrait image

An in focus black bicycle seat occupies the foreground of the photo. It points upward, an identical but out of focus seat just behind it in the top right corner of the image. The front seat sits on two rusted, spring coils, one coil in the bottom left corner, the other slightly higher and to the right of center. Stitching is evident along the back and right edges of the leather seat. The back end is angled slightly and stretches the entire width of the photo. A thin metal label is attached to the center of the back end like a license plate, two circular bolts on either end. The label has two lines of text-- the top line slightly larger than the bottom. They read: "SCHWINN" and then "APPROVED." A narrow reflection of light shines on the right side of the seat crowning the coil's parade of light and shadow below.

The background contains many blurred shapes and colors. On the left, and through the bottom left corner, fuzzy green grass punctuated with an indiscernible white dot in the top left corner, suggesting a reflection of sun on metal. Blurred red bars parallel the right edge interrupted by the leather seats. Along the bottom, shadows confuse the other metal parts of the bike as they form semi-vertical lines underneath the seat.

A fuzzy label is centered on the back of the second seat—its text invisibly smeared into the metal's glare. A second display of coiled light and shadow blend into the blush red of the bicycle frame curving into the right side of the photo.

4 Trapped

A landscape image

Dark green rope forms a net curtain stretching across the image's

foreground. The thin rope twists around itself, creating knotted corners amidst a pattern of asymmetrical openings.

A green landscape of smooth lawn bordered by trees in the distance is discernible through the diamond-like windows. Lighter shades blend and blur into darker greens at the horizon's edge.

The net captures sunlight, accentuating twists and texture in the taught rope. Detail fades moving away from the image's center, but the presence of the net is still evident.

Beyond the net, the blurred row of trees captures the sunlight, the light's existence accentuated only by the presence of shadow.

Between two of the ropes just to the right of center, a spider's thread illuminated by the sun.

Through the openings at the top left of the image, a thin row of white sky.

5 Tormented by Titles

A portrait image

The image shows a rectangle of books on shelves. The center shelves are white horizontal lines extending beyond the left and right sides of the photo. The top and bottom shelves are not shown in their entirety. The white shelves seem to be somewhat askew or viewed from an odd angle so that the image is not exactly level as the books move horizontally across the image. Instead they rise slightly and appear to diminish in size as they approach the right border.

Some books lie horizontally on top of the shelved books, a hodgepodge of rich textures and lines. Open spaces in the shelves make the books slant

and create dark gaps in the horizontal and vertical patchwork.

The spines of the books are decorated with a myriad of colorful fonts, logos and symbols. For most of the books, titles are legible. An occasional author or publisher also appears. “RAM DASS STILL HERE” boldly, in all caps, on a maroon spine. “HAPPINESS IS A WARM PUPPY” less boldly, though still in all caps, on a smaller off-white spine. “IF THE BUDDHA CAME TO DINNER.” “INITIATION.” “CLAUDE MONET.” Alice Walker, David Whyte, Rumi, Mary Oliver. “The BOOK of SECRETS by Deepak Chopra” framed and placed on a pale yellow spine resting horizontally on the skyline of shelf three.

It is a bright uneven tiered skyline of books, a crazy quilt of colors, shapes and printed titles. The books are bordered by the bright white lines of the center shelves and a glimpse of the bright white back showing behind the uneven bottom row of shelves. Other than that, only books and shadows.

6 Another Angle on the Truth

A landscape image

A trio of silver soda cans is seen close up. The image captures only the can's uppermost sections. The rounded shape of the front two cans seem to come out of the frame, tilting toward the viewer. They lean slightly to the left in an asymmetrical stance. Two of them are side by side—more of the right can is visible so it seems elevated or taller. The third can, barely perceptible, waits behind the other two in the top left corner.

The cans are unopened, the pull tabs emerge flatly from a mix of shine and shadow. From this angle, the circular tops masquerade as ovals, cut off by the photos side and upper edges. Thin bands of metal accentuate the tops with precision.

The sides of the two front cans are decorated with a handful of randomly placed shapes that appear to be water drops. Segments of white rectangles frame black words forming a chart on each of the two cans. The words speak with varying degrees of depth and focus under the bolded heading “Nutrition Facts.”

The chart on the right can is distinct and includes more information. Serving Size—1 can. Below that, Amount per serving. Then Calories—0. % Daily..., right justified and cut off Total Fat-0g Sodium-40mg Total Carb-0g Protein-0g Finally, an unreadable cut-off portion of a word as it meets the right corner of the photo.

The left can wears a fuzzy chart with unclear letters ending at the “Amount Per Serving” line. To the right of the chart, a series of vertical words are blurred beyond discernment.

Above the charts, more words. The glare breaks the letters though the message is still intelligible. “Very Low Sodium...”

Near the center of the image, the two front cans round their way into one another. Their gray sides disappear into a thin line of shadow pointing to the corner where the other can waits. Only a small fraction of this third can is visible, a few misshapen circles blurring into the gray side.

7 Fire

A landscape image

Burning wood, much of it turned to charcoal, is viewed close up. A deep, dark hole consumes the center of the image. The dark void is framed on three sides with a haphazard display of black and gray charcoal. On the left, a split log extends, angled beyond the image’s view. Splinters of the

previously brown log are still evident as they meet a gray and black grid-like pattern of charcoal. More charcoal is layered along the bottom of the image. The right side holds another charcoaled log, towering vertically along the photo's edge.

A slender, smooth silhouette of a flame rises out of the charcoal in the lower left corner. Its golden left edge turns into a bright orange color as it flickers beyond the top of the photo. A transparent orange mist echoes the flame's right and lower sides making it seem like it is floating, not attached to anything tangible. More of this transparent orange mist is visible in front of the burnt log on the right, a sheer veil tinting the image with color. The mist grows increasingly dense near the lower right corner of the image, evidence of another flame not fully in view.

8 Reaching Out

A portrait image

A large, leafless tree extends diagonally from the lower left portion of the image. Its crooked limbs reach out, creating a network of branches that stretch across an otherwise clear, blue sky. A few of the limbs are broken, revealing jagged points like scars. A trio of larger branches leaves a triangular impression; two of the three create a zigzag line from the top left to the bottom right, the third offering itself to the top right corner. They all join the more-sturdy trunk just to the left of the image's center.

Sunlight enhances details of texture and depth in the bark, visible only on the larger limbs. The less-sturdy, smaller branches seem to glisten as they welcome and reflect the companionship of light

Another tree emerges from the lower left portion of the image, a somewhat miniature version of the larger tree above it. This smaller tree reaches out, extending only to the place where the larger tree's limbs meet the trunk.

Some detail is evident on the smaller tree's bark. Imitating the other, it too glistens in the companionship of light.

9 Choice

A landscape image

The image captures a portion of a bush whose tiny flowers reveal varying degrees of fullness. In the background, clusters of small pink circles, barely visible unopened blossoms, seem immobilized by a shroud of dark shadows.

From the left side of the image, a pink bouquet springs forward on green leafy stems. It holds four or five clusters of pink flowers bunched together and saturated with light. Three other smaller clusters reach out from this illuminated bunch each containing forty or fifty small pink buds resting on a blanket of slim, pointed leaves. They form a triangular frame on the left side of the image, two of the clusters below the bouquet, one above.

The presence of light on the left seems to lift the flowers, a palpable contrast to the dim shadows that prevail on the right and behind. The pink flowers burst open revealing pale yellow centers in the midst of many shades of pink. Countless fuzzy stamens rising from the blossom, blurred glitter against the bright light and the shadows. A small bee can be seen wandering through the open blossoms, kissing the light.

10 Broken is in the Eye of the Beholder

A landscape image

The image shows the top of a predominantly leafless tree against a creamy yellowish-white sky. The tree's trunk extends upward from the lower right edge of the photo. The trunk separates into two large limbs; the one on the

right in alignment with the trunk below and the one on the left at a 45 degree angle. Between these two limbs, a third and much shorter limb protrudes, taking up a fraction of the space the other limbs occupy. The right limb ends abruptly with a jagged, broken tip. Details of the wood and bark are visible on this solid upright limb.

The limb on the left side stretches out diagonally across the image before curving slightly and extending beyond the top left edge of the photo. This limb is adorned with many smaller, leafless branches that tangle and overlap. The tiniest first signs of budding are evident. Thin branches are also visible around the main trunk, but they are noticeably absent near the broken tip.

11 Everyday Miracles

A portrait image

A close-up of a plant, a red, ripe tomato hangs from a vine. Sturdy green stems come into the photo from the right edge and connect to the tomato, suspending and holding it in place. Another green v-shaped stem branches down from shadow in the upper right corner and blossoms into wrinkled leaves. At the bottom, more green leaves, somewhat blurred on the left. A distinct leaf is seen in the bottom right corner, details of its wrinkled veins apparent. A blurred hint of light brown-orange is tucked behind this leaf in the shadows.

The tomato's bright color bursts into the green layers of leaves and shadow. It rests in the center of the image, much of its round shape visible. The tomato seems to shine, light reflecting off a spot near the center. An outer layer of fuzz is noticeable on the tomato's skin, stems, and leaves.

12 Old Friends

A landscape image

In the foreground, dark silhouettes of two leaning willows shadow one another, bowing slightly left. They show as gnarled black outlines on a blue horizon. The image captures only the midsections of the leafless trees. A few jagged branches extend from the trunks and bend in various directions.

Thin, wispy branches dangle, suspended from the top edge of the image. The limbs of both trees are accompanied by their own series of these flowing, wispy branches that intertwine between the two dark trunks. A haze of smaller branches outlined against the blue sky creates the illusion of a backdrop behind the solid trunks and limbs.

The leafless Willows overlook a hazy palette of charcoal blue. The textured background is a deception of separate colors; darker storm clouds with breaks of lighter clouds.

13 Surrender

A landscape image

A golden ball of light drops behind a silhouetted landscape of mountains. Colors radiate from the golden center, bright orange fades before blurring into muted lavender at the top of the photo. The mountains are seen unevenly, tilting slightly upward as they stretch from left to right across the horizon just below the center of the image.

A handful of thin trees appear in the foreground. Without leaves, their dark silhouettes are not intrusive. A single tree on the left side reaches beyond the top edge of the photo. Otherwise, the trees are only thin branches, reaching up toward the vibrant sky.

A body of water rests at the foot of the mountains. Its presence is intensified by a central orange reflection. The reflection expands and moves away from the golden center; it mixes with the wind, leaving colorful ripples on the water's surface.

14 Rest in Wonder

A portrait image

A close-up view of a rose, the center rests just above the middle of the image. The view is angled revealing a fragmented and inconsistent dark background only near the upper edge of the photo. Throughout the rest, pale yellow petals cascade in layers from the center where darker yellow petals appear wrinkled, almost clasping something unseen.

The image captures the broad view of three large, blended petals above the center. They line up forming a pale backdrop, their slightly pointed tips tickling the photo's top edge. The flower's other petals unfold asymmetrically and appear larger as they approach the bottom of the image. Thin shadows amidst the petals suggest light, billowy depth.

A series of distinct petals emerges from the lower right corner. The soft, curled petals ascend toward the flower's deep yellow center like a beckoning staircase.

15 Illuminated Intricacies

A portrait image

The mid-section of a single tree is lit up, contrasting sharply against a black night sky. The trunk extends vertically in the center of the image. Leaves are absent from the Maple's limbs as they reach up, and to the right and

left from their connecting points along the length of the trunk. They appear in varying degrees of light, seeming brighter in the foreground and fading as they round the back of the tree into the darkness. Details of the textured brown-gray bark are also visible to varying degrees, coinciding with the presence or absence of light. The ridges along the trunk's bark are evident for most of its length, blending into the relative darkness near the top of the image.

A limb near the front of the tree looks especially bright as it reaches up and out and then splits into a V, the right branch veering off the right edge of the photo. The left side of the V extends almost vertically and splits a second time before the top left corner. Smaller webs of branches connect throughout the limbs. They lighten and dim without obvious reason, matching the tones of the larger limbs, creating a splendid pattern of illuminated intricacies amidst the darkness.

16 A Reasonable Accommodation of Spirit

A landscape image

Throughout, light flirts with edges of a neatly trimmed bush. Pale green leaves tease shadows and tiny twigs creating an almost-orderly, if not elaborately, textured background

From the lower right, a long, seemingly out of place stem leans to the right as it liberates a single red tulip. Light outlines the not-quite open petals and waits.

17 Trusting the Waves

A portrait image

The entire image is shallow water, two small gentle waves moving in on the

horizon. As the water crests for the first wave near the top edge, it appears to be a purplish blue color. It takes on a more brownish tone when it moves into the second wave near the center of the image. Shadows provide added depth to the curving waves that extend beyond the left and right edges. Reflections dance on the surface of the water illustrating additional movement. The reflections fade and make way for tiny white bubbles at the bottom of the photo. The view seems layered in horizontal colors, shades, and patterns of light.

The top blue layer entertains a series of smaller ripples that emerge as humps of light and shadow. Pebbles and rocks are visible beneath the water's surface throughout much of the image. They are most evident in the lower section and disappear when the water becomes blue. Similarly, the white bubbles dissipate and only speckle the water's surface in the upper layers.

18 Relative Focus on Gratitude

A landscape image

A predominantly blurred image, light and shadow blend into varying tones of green and white; a few small red circles appear together on the right side of the image and a couple more appear in the bottom left. Clusters of white flowers of varying heights and in varying degrees of focus overwhelm the image giving it depth and expansiveness. Interspersed with splashes of green stalks and leaves, the majority of the flowers are taller and blurry; a small gathering of shorter more distant flowers are in relative focus just to the left of the photo's center.

Nestled among other fuzzy flowers, this single cluster reveals crisp clear centers. Several yellow stamen stretch toward the light and overcome a slight shadow created by fuzzy petals from nearby flowers.

19 Gladness

A portrait image

A close-up view of a coral-colored gladiola. The gladiola's resolute green stem climbs up the left side of the photo, balancing the blurred green shadows in the background on the right side of the image. The stem cups a vertical row of open blossoms, a softly focused band of brilliant color extending from top to bottom.

On the right, a series of petals appear stacked, folding into soft points with space between them where the blurred background is visible. Near the bottom, a relative absence of color is noticeable on several petals as they open to the light. At the top, a drop of water glistens on a petal's edge. In the center of the image, a small wandering insect explores the cavernous opening of the flower.

Throughout the image, the ruffled edges of the living coral flowers meander up the frame, in and out of light and shadow. They intertwine leaving ambiguity about where one blossom begins and another one ends, concealing the distinctions that would suggest any clear center.

20 The Morning's Kindness

A landscape image

A thin band of white snow forms the bottom edge of the image. It curves almost undetectably; a slight hill rising on the left. A darker layer of shadows combs the snow before distinguishing itself into trees just above the midsection of the image. The now-apparent forest appears in front of a pale orange-pink sky. Trees are seen in varying heights. Several thin trunks reach from the shadows beyond the top of the image.

A faint orange ball of light relaxes on the shadows just to the left of the image's center. The sky fades into a textured white cap at the top edge of the photo almost balancing the curved layer of snow below the shadows.

The entire scene blends and blurs in the absence of precise edges. Without distinct boundaries, the images seem as if they are dancing on an invisible breeze—as if the trees themselves were smudged into the fading colors of the morning sky. Or as if the trees themselves were emerging from the faint orange light we have learned to call the sun.

Near the bottom left corner, a blurred figure is visible. A snow-covered roof seems to hover over a double-paned window and blend into the shadows. The right side of this small structure becomes evident after distinguishing the roof and window. A line of small blurred prayer flags hang from the roof's edge and dance on the invisible breeze.

With Thanks

“If the only prayer you say in your entire life is thank you, it will be enough.”
~Meister Eckhart

Thank you to so many and in so many ways (but no particular order).
Linda, Laurel, Mary, Anne-Marie, Gisela, Steve, Uta, Cheryl, Julie, Patrick,
Caroline, Teresa, Mama Bear, Jackie, Karen, Terre, Susan, Heather,
Casey, Michelle, Geoff, Sophie, Scott, Andrea, Melinda, Olivia, Judy,
Peggy, Katie, John, Kat, Ashley, Corrine, Toby, Chris, my father, the Foof,
and Amanda