

## Photographers share offbeat side of Florida with TECO exhibit



Peter Bates, of Sun City Center, uses HDR techniques to depict St. Petersburg's Lakeview Market.



BY LAURA CONE  
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DOWNTOWN — Three photographers present "The Offbeat Side of Florida," a final exhibition for the year at the TECO Public Art Gallery, 702 North Franklin Street, Tampa, now through Jan. 1, 2016.

Married couple Cheryl Levin and Peter Bates, of Sun City Center, as well as Robert Winch, of Apollo Beach, photographed junk yards, corner stores and local architecture. A "Talk and Tour" reception will take place from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Dec. 10 at the gallery. The event is free and open to the public.

Winch said he likes taking photographs of landscape and architecture. His passion is to find an unusual angle.

"I have enjoyed photography all my life, but did not feel that I could be creative with the film and chemicals for various reasons," he said. "However in the digital age, the combination of my computing skills and photography in the last 10 years has allowed me to experiment and produce the images that I can be proud of."

Winch said he is particular fond of his "Beer Can Through the Cube," which depicts two iconic downtown buildings in perfect symmetry.

"I was on a downtown photo shoot with my club, and always on the lookout for that special shot," he said. "I look around me in all directions and particularly up, which most people miss, and there it was. I took my time framing the shot and worked it into black and white in Photoshop."

For the final TECO art exhibit of the year, Winch joins Peter Bates, the husband of fellow photographer Cheryl Levin.

Bates, who is originally from Boston, moved to Sun City Center with his wife in 2013.

"Right now my favorite places to photograph are unusual and colorful corner stores, as well as other small businesses," Bates said. "I've been photographing convenience stores since 2008, and lately I've been shooting other places where people congregate."

Bates, a member of the Sun City Center Photo Club, said he takes most of his photographs at twilight where there's a mixture of natural and artificial light.

Although he goes on photo shoots with his wife, Bates said they end up photographing completely different subject matters using their own distinct approaches.

He has been a documentary photographer since 1981 when he photographed downtown Lynn, Massachusetts, after a devastating fire.

"Being a documentary photographer initially meant capturing places and people at a certain period of time that was rapidly vanishing," Bates said. "I did drive-in theaters for a while, for example. Now, with 'The Bodega Project,' I photograph these businesses because I want to capture what they offer in design, structure and color (such as their murals). Unlike some traditional documentary, I put artistic effort on the same level as the ideas conveyed, not subservient to it. For example, I never allow cars in front of my buildings and I always use post-processing techniques to emphasize detail and lighting."

Levin said she was excited to be part of the TECO exhibit.

"I wanted to give people a new way of looking at the discarded items that they normally ignore," said Levin, who photographs recycled metals and junkyards.

"When Peter and I lived in Boston, we discovered an abandoned shed a few miles from our house," she said. "It had such great textures with its walls of blue-gray peeling paint and multi-colored rusted hinges. I found that my photographing portions of walls and doors, I could create an artistic interpretation of the decaying structure. When we moved to the Tampa Bay area, I asked managers of a recycling plant if I could photograph bins of colorful electronic scrap."

Levin said she hopes people look deeply at what is called "junk" — such as a block of crushed cans or rusted brake drum — to see the artistic patterns and colors.

The TECO Public Art Gallery is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

For information on the exhibit, call (813) 767-1600.