

Foothills Focus

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Science as Unexpected Beauty

“In a crystal we have clear evidence of the existence of a formative life principle, and though we cannot understand the life of a crystal, it is nonetheless a living being with unexpected beauty.”

-Nikola Tesla.

Imagination provides the “scope” which allows us to see “those many things that are already there.” Such is the life and journey of local scientist and artist Lee Hendrickson. He believes that it is the artist’s goal to make the invisible visible. The process of doing so reveals to the viewer a fresh, thought-provoking worldview. Hendrickson brings for the “worldview” seen only through the microscope.

Hendrickson began his incredible journey growing up outside Chicago. At age 12 he earned money shoveling snow during the seemingly endless winter. The funds provided him with enough money to purchase his first microscope. He added it to his small laboratory in the basement of his family home. A few years later Hendrickson moved his scientific curiosity to the much warmer climate of Atlanta, GA where he attended Emory University to pursue a Bachelor of Science degree in biology. Shortly before graduation he took his first photograph through a microscope. The subject was the rat flea, the transmitter of the bubonic plague. As fascinating as it was, he realized there were limited career paths in pictures of fleas. Instead he entered a career as a research scientist with both academic and biotech institutions. This career would reveal many scientific paths over the next 35 years of his life.

While enjoying a successful career in science, Hendrickson obtained an associate degree in biomedical photography from Bellevue College in Bellevue, WA. The program allowed him to focus his skills in both macro and micro photography. During his training in the 1980’s he discovered the hidden and magical world of crystals. At this point, Hendrickson began growing his own crystals and discovered an endlessly fascinating subject matter for his photography. In 2005 he founded Side Street Photographics which proved to be a fateful move. Not long after Hendrickson set up his small enterprise, he was caught in his third corporate downsizing. He decided it was time to pursue photography full time.

As a scientist, Hendrickson is continuously experimenting. His most recent creations are the result of new processes with old favorites, including tartaric acids found in wine, phenylethylamine crystals found in chocolate and new crystalline compounds like Vitamin B3. As he describes it, “The bottom-line is, changes in the conditions under which I grow the crystals will change the patterns and ultimately allow for the creation of new and exciting pieces.”

Today Hendrickson and his wife live in the Phoenix area. His home studio/lab is a constant environment for expanding his knowledge of crystal compounds, photographic techniques, and exploring the endless array of patterns hidden in the micro world. Hendrickson lectures on his technique to interior designers and photography enthusiasts alike. To view Hendrickson’s

astonishing images or to contact him, visit www.PhotographyofCrystals.com. Meet Hendrickson at the Arizona Fine Art Expo, Studio 50 and 51 now through March 22. For more information go to www.arizonafineartexpo.com. Contact Arts Columnist, Shea Stanfield, flowingquill@yahoo.com