



Passing Lights on Bradford Street

GEORGE HIROSE: BLUE NIGHTS

Ernden Fine Art Gallery
397 Commercial Street
Provincetown, Massachusetts

June 27 through July 10

"THE NIGHT IS EXPANSIVE."

These are the words Norman Mailer uttered upon first seeing George Hirose's transporting series of photographs taken over several years of late night wanderings through the streets of Provincetown.

There is something mythological about Provincetown; all of us who have spent time there know it. It forces us to go beyond our everyday experience, to enter the unknown. In these deeply affecting and beautiful photographs, Hirose has surrendered to this expansive, transporting realm of place and time, Provincetown at night, and he has touched the timeless.

This exhibition was selected from this body of work, which is also featured in "Blue Nights," a newly published book by Provincetown Arts Press that opens with an insightful essay by Mailer. Its release will be celebrated on Friday, July 11 from 5 to 7 p.m. at the annual publishing party at Provincetown Art Association and Museum.

The fortunate viewer walks through the mysterious night with Hirose, a time when color vision fades, and our sight adapts to darkness, grasping the diffuse periphery. The blurred, conflated, apparitional images, seen from the corners of our eyes, some exposures taken over long minutes, reveal subtle shifts of color and signs of invitation...houses with lit windows, an open door, or the glow of the moon reflected in the rolling dunes. Linear time is released and the separation of past and present disappears.

A professor of photography at Pratt Institute in New York City, Hirose has been visiting Provincetown for years. He was much aware of the seminal work of Joel Meyerowitz in "Cape Light," and wondered what he could say of his own about the place. He was especially drawn to one particular sunset photograph in "Cape Light," and it occurred to him that the hours after sunset - the dark blue and emerald beauty with which a late evening can suddenly fall into night - had not been explored.

In time, over the course of his neighborly friendship with Mailer, Hirose showed him the work. Mailer seemed to lose himself in the photographs, Hirose observed, and immediately suggested collaboration. He set the book in motion. The photographs provided a visual equivalent of the way Mailer felt about Provincetown, something of the town's mysterious and poetic dialogue with the past. The book was an opportunity to express his thoughts and feelings about Provincetown, near the end of his life, that last summer.



Looking for Love

For Hirose, Mailer as mentor, teacher and writer took him on an incredible narrative journey of his rich experience of Provincetown, his long-time home. Mailer pushed Hirose to do some things, he says, he didn't want to do - more boats, more lighthouses. "I didn't want to do the touristy things," Hirose said. "I wanted to explore the intimacy of the village." But he stretched.

"For me, Norman was a generous and supportive man," Hirose said. "Norman loved Provincetown, had lived there for many years, and felt that these photographs should be published as a book. As a result, he connected me with Mike Lennon and Chris Busa of Provincetown Arts Press, and set everything in motion. He also provided invaluable insight during the editing and sequencing, and especially in coming up with interesting titles for the images. His beautiful introduction for the book helps ground the work with a solid context. Words cannot express my gratitude to him and as I continue on with this project, I can still feel his spirit guide me."

There's something comforting about these images, the enveloping night, accepting, forgiving; the quiet, the awareness of others' unseen presence, their desires and sorrows and sweetness; the deep blue, passionate mystery of Provincetown.

Hirose's extraordinary ability to bring his technical expertise and his soulful vision into union in these photographs predicts more visually captivating, evocative explorations of the crossroads of place and time and human presence.

Rena Lindstrom