

Linda S. Thibodeau
Director
Division of Libraries, Archives,
& Museums
www.eed.state.ak.us



Bruce Kato
Chief Curator
Alaska State Museums
395 Whittier St.
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1718
907.465.2901

Press Release

SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM

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FOR MORE INFORMATION: Rosemary Carlton
Phone (907) 747-8981 Fax (907) 747-3004
www.museums.state.ak.us

ALASKA POSITIVE 2008 STATEWIDE PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION ON DISPLAY AT THE SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM

Alaska Positive 2008, the statewide photography-as-art exhibition organized every two years by the Alaska State Museum, goes on display at the Sheldon Jackson Museum January 10, 2009. An opening reception hosted by The Friends of Sheldon Jackson Museum will take place from 1-3 p.m. on January 10. The museum is located at 104 College Drive.

The juror for Alaska Positive 2008 was Bill Owens, a photographer known for his depictions of American lifestyles, most notably in the landmark book "Suburbia" that was published in 1972, depicting life in a new California tract-house development. Owens selected 56 photographs by 42 photographers for the Alaska Positive exhibit. 80 Alaska photographers from 10 Alaska communities submitted 267 photographs for the competition.

The top award – the Juror's Choice Award – went to Bonnie Landis of Anchorage for a photograph titled "Rooftop." Second and third place cash awards went to Ben Huff of Fairbanks and Deanna Lampe of Juneau. Brandon Hauser of Juneau received a Fourth Place award.

In addition, ten other photographers were given Honorable Mentions: William Heath, Kenai; Ben Huff, Fairbanks; Jayne Jones, Kenai; Pat Kalbaugh, Juneau; Barbara Kelly, Juneau; Clark James Mishler, Anchorage; Tama Phelps, Anchorage; John Schwieder, Anchorage; Nathaniel Wilder, Anchorage; and Carol J. Zeien, Seldovia.

Commenting on the exhibition, Owens said, "There were about 270 photographs to look at and from that number I had to select the best 1st, 2nd, 3rd, & 4th place, and 10 Honorable Mentions. As a photographer who is always involved in the documentary image, I was looking for the winners to be people who had a big vision of Alaska, and the winner was a landscape image with an abandoned building that had the composition and color, the mountains, and the mist, and spoke to me over other images where the photographer failed to get the composition right, the subject material was not interesting, or the making of the image wasn't really thought through."

Owen also expressed his opinion that "one thing that was conspicuously absent from the group of photographs were photos relating to other humans – a dynamic portrait. There were only a handful of portraits of people in their environment. The images tended to be random, not really giving me the photographer's point of view of concern for the environment, or concern – passion – for other human beings... It is time for photographers to move on to photographing our environment and to show the impact that we have on the land and the sea. Today, with global warming being real, it is time for us to evaluate our lifestyles and to become concerned about how we live. Photographers should show this environment."

Alaska Positive 2008 will remain on exhibit through March 5. It continues a one-year tour of other museums in Alaska. Winter hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. General admission is \$3. Visitors 18 and younger, Friends of the Sheldon Jackson Museum, and those with passes are admitted free of charge.