

## Florida Museum Of Photographic Arts

By Karen McBride

Driving into downtown Tampa, you will see tall skyscrapers, newly planted palm trees (in preparation for the Republican National Convention), glimpses of the Hillsborough River, and John Wayne. That's right, "the Duke" is overlooking the city on the side of the Cube at Rivergate Plaza. The modern, architecturally impressive building is home of the Florida Museum of Photographic Arts (FMOA). The museum has been in existence since 2001 when Charles J. Levin, Vincent Sorrentino and Cynthia L. Flowers established the Tampa Gallery of Photographic Arts. It continued to grow over the years, and in 2006, the Board of Directors changed the name to Florida Museum of Photographic Arts. In March, the museum moved to its new location which has doubled the space for exhibits.

Exhibits are chosen from a wish list based on feedback from members and what they would like to see at the museum. The staff will then research the availability of the photographic art and the cost. The exhibits usually run for 8-12 weeks.

The current exhibit is "The Secret Paris of the 1930's: Vintage Photographs by Brassai". Gyula Halasz, known as Brassai, was born in 1899 in Brassa, on the Hungarian-Romanian border. He studied painting and sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts in Budapest. In 1920, he went to Berlin and worked as a journalist and continued his education at Berlin-Charlottenburg Academy of Fine Arts.

Brassai later moved to Paris in 1924. Interestingly, Brassai was good friends with many revolutionaries of the art world, including artists Picasso, Salvador Dali, Henri Matisse, the writer Henry Miller and Hungarian photographer Andre

Kertesz. Picasso thought that Brassai was wasting his time taking photographs and should concentrate on his drawings, some of which are also on display among the photographs. The multitiered photographer also wrote plays and articles for respected publications. He was well liked by the high society crowd and would attend many of their parties and would frequent artists' cafes.

Brassai would explore Paris at night. The misty images in his photographs are reminiscent of a Sherlock Holmes movie. He was an expert at capturing contrast and light. Brassai would also take pictures of couples, unique characters in bars, and ladies of the evening. Henry Miller called him "the eye of Paris".

Madame Bijou was one of the more interesting subjects. She was a well to do lady and then fell on hard times. A character frozen in time, her once glamorous clothing had become tattered and torn. Adorned with jewelry that reflected happier times, when the jewelry held real diamonds, rather than costume jewels. Her glamorous life became one where she lived on charity and read customer's palms. The famous Madame Bijou was featured in the movie Titanic. Jack (played by Leonardo DiCaprio) is seen drawing a picture of Madame Bijou, a lady he met in a bar in Paris.

Photographs include a couple that have had a disagreement and it is named The Quarrel, Bal des Quatres Saisons, rue de Lappe, 1932. Passage de Cloute, 1937, shows a man in the middle of two ladies walking through the city on a rainy day. The contrast and light give a ripple effect on the wet cobblestone street. Street Toughs is one of Brassai's photographs that was enhanced in the dark room. The two thugs look as if they are half hidden behind a dark wall, but there was no wall. The artist's



wallet was stolen when taking these photographs, even though he paid them for their time. He chose not to press charges because that was just how they lived.

The third floor of the museum has an exhibit of the members' photography. In extreme contrast to the solemn, black and white photographs of Paris, the bright, colorful photos represent today's

happier times. Members are invited to show and discuss their photography. "Your 15 Minutes of Fame" is held throughout the year. The next event will be held September 19, from 7:00-8:30 pm. Six presenters are scheduled for each session and the audience is encouraged to participate in discussions which may include techniques used to capture the

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amazing imagery.

The third floor will have the FMoPA members show until August 5.

To take advantage of all the museum has to offer, becoming a member has many levels with discounts and perks available. Classes are available to members and non-members. "Photography 101", taught by Chip Weiner, covers the basics of camera settings, composition and light. Have fun while learning practical and artistic ways to use your camera. The next 5-day class begins August 7. The cost is \$120 for members, \$155 for non-members.

For a one day workshop, register for "Brown Bag Workshop 1", which will be held on August 12 from 11:00 to 2:00. "Brown Bag Workshop 2" is a two-day workshop and will be held on August 19 and August 26 from 11-12:30. iPhone users will enjoy iPhonography, which will be held on August 26 from 1:00-4:00.

Instructor Jim Reiman will share his favorite apps and tips to taking great pictures with your iPhone. The cost for each class is \$35 for members and \$55 for non-members.

FMoPA wants to pass on the love of photography to the next generation, and give back to the community with their Literacy Through Photography program. This outreach program gives children the opportunity to learn about photography with the use of cameras, laptops and books. The next program will be held on August 11 at St. Joseph's Children's Hospital. The museum staff will spend 2-3 hours at the hospital teaching the pediatric patients how to take pictures. A puppet show will be held where the children will take pictures of the puppets and then write a short story about it. "It's a great way to teach the children about photography and to encourage writing. They are having fun and becoming better writers

in the process", says Joyce Zevola, Museum Manager.

Organizations and schools can schedule a visit to the museum. Free digital photography workshops are offered to at-risk children from underserved communities. Children are given a tour of the museum and allowed to use the cameras to give them the opportunity to explore the wonderful world of photography. A few of the organizations that have benefited from this outreach program include Joshua House, Metropolitan Ministries, and Children's Cancer Center. Classes can be held at the museum or at the organization and are taught by museum staff and volunteers. The children are invited back to the museum to attend a reception where they will find one photograph from each child, framed and displayed, at the annual Summer Children's Show.

FMoPA is funded by private donations and through Arts Council of Hillsborough County.

The museum is closed Mondays; open Tuesday-Thursday 10:00 am-5:00 pm, Friday 10:00 am-8:00 pm, Saturday 10:00 am-5:00 pm and Sunday 12:00-5:00 pm. The cost is \$10 (\$8 for students, free for members). Parking is available in Rivergate Plaza for \$5. You can bring your parking ticket to the museum reception desk to be validated. Parking is also available along the street and free on weekends.

The museum is located at 400 North Ashley Drive, Tampa. For more information on classes, volunteering and more, go to www.fmo.org or call 813-221-2222.

What will the future of photography hold? Will we still be able to see framed photographs or will moments in time be displayed in holograms? For right now, during these hot summer days, visit the air conditioned museum and take a stroll down the streets of 1930s France as seen by the "eye of Paris".

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