



Oregon City's House of 3D Art!!

Patrick Sherman - 03/29/06

photo by PATRICK SHERMAN

Dean Walch is ready for action with his vintage 1940s Stereo Realist camera. These days, he uses a pair of \$8 digital cameras to create his 3D masterpieces.

New life for yesterday's art form of the future

Those cardboard eyeglasses with mismatched cellophane lenses that caused audiences to flinch when a fiery meteor came crashing down to Earth in 1953's "It Came from Outer Space" have reappeared at Oregon City's Carnegie Center.

The 3D views that they reveal are not of sneaky space aliens converting the hapless residents of tiny Sand Rock, Ariz., into soulless automatons, but rather local historic structures and scenic vistas, thanks to local photographer Dean Walch.

"I majored in photography at Marylhurst," said Walch, who graduated in 1994. "I was always trying to capture that sense of place, and then I got interested in stereo photography — it really helps capture that sense, and the scale of things."

Stereo photography involves capturing two images side-by-side and then combining them to create a single three-dimensional image. The same general principle is used in View-Masters and stereo view cards, which first appeared in the 19th Century.

To create his images, Walch uses anaglyphs, which superimpose red and blue "ghosts" on a black-and-white image. When viewed through the medium's trademark cardboard eyeglasses, the result is an illusion of depth.

"Your eyes are like, 'I'm seeing a 3D image on what is basically a flat piece of paper,'" he said. "It's actually extremely easy to do. It takes like a minute to combine the images in Photoshop."

In 1997, Walch was invited to demonstrate his technique at the National Stereoscopic Association meeting in Bellevue, Wash.

"It's kind of a cult, I would say. These people are into science — there is definitely a scientific component to all this," he said. "It's definitely a unique group of people, and there aren't a lot of people doing it."

"The people that I've met are more interested in sharing it with the group, rather than getting it out into the public."

Walch, who now works as the website coordinator at Clackamas Community College, eventually stopped taking stereoscopic photographs as other events in his life intervened.

"We bought an old house, and my creative energy went into that, and then we adopted," he said. "When my son and I started going out for walks, I thought I might as well get back into photography."

To capture his images, Walch built an inexpensive "twin rig" — a wooden block with a bubble level and a pair of \$8 digital cameras. He hopes to build more and sell them at the Carnegie Center and OMSI so children can take their own 3D photographs.

"The whole thing is held together with a rubber band from an asparagus bunch," he said.

In spite of the simple tools that he is using, Walch is achieving eye-catching results.

"I'm selling them primarily as cards," he said. "They are selling pretty well at the Carnegie Center. Originally, I didn't know if they would take off or not, but they almost sold out in the first week."

He has also printed larger versions of his images.

"When the images get bigger, they really pop," he said. "I get a lot of them printed at Costco. The first time I took them in, the lady said to me, 'I think there's something wrong with my machine!'"

"The next time I went in, I brought along a pair of glasses, and it all started to make sense to her."

For subjects, Walch has turned his cameras on the historic homes of Oregon City.

"The fact that they are in black and white gives them a timeless quality. That seemed like a good match for the McLoughlin Neighborhood," he said. "I'm definitely delving into history."

See in 3D

Starting June 6 and running through the end of the month, a collection of Walch's photographs will be on display at the Carnegie Center in Oregon City.

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A little history...

The invention of anaglyphic 3D images is attributed to Josph D'Almeida of France, who used the technique in the 1850s to project glass stereo lantern slides. The technique was first used in film in 1889, and enjoyed its first heyday during the 1920s. At that time, 3D movies were known as "plasticons."

In the 1950s, anaglyphic 3D was used in comic books. Readers donned "space goggles" to follow the adventures of Mighty Mouse into the third dimension. Despite costing 25 cents, rather than a dime, the book was an instant sellout.

The decade also witnessed a return of 3D to the big screen, with the release of films such as "House of Wax," "It Came from Outer Space" and "The Creature from the Black Lagoon."

The last commercially successful 3D movie was "Jaws 3D," released in 1983.