

E-INTERVIEW FOR [BOOK PLEASURES](#)

Norm:

Good day Jenny and thanks for taking part in our interview.

Your search for exceptional beauty has taken you on a global artistic journey. Could you describe the moments or experiences during your travels that have had a profound effect on your artistic vision??

Jenny:

I went to Patagonia on the way to the Antarctic this year to visit beautiful Torres del Paine. I studied the cloud formations above the different mountain tops. There were clouds that looked like popcorn, some that looked like scoops of ice-cream and then ones with wispy horse hairs. The mountains looked like fists reaching up to the sky. There was so much action in the landscape I felt as if I was conducting with my camera.

I do not research about where I am going beforehand. I want a fresh and personal experience when I start photographing. I am not interested in the one perfect composition but in a cubist views from different vantage points. I will be assembling those shots into a finished artwork later in photoshop.

Color and shadows dominate my thinking like making a map of my thoughts. My artistic vision is a combination of years imagining the world as an artwork.

Norm:

Your portfolio is a mixture of subjects, featuring architectural marvels, breathtaking landscapes, and capturing the human body in its most personal moments. How do you differentiate your approach to each subject, and what motivates you to explore such a broad range of themes?

Jenny:

I am looking at the world in search of beauty whether it be a building, a landscape, or a body. With the architecture I am focused on linear ideas, landscape on color and shadow and the nudes on projected images to indicate form.

If I am making images for an opera-set I let the music and libretto guide me. Dulce Rosa was based on a short story by Isabel Allende who told me that the location was generic South America. I travelled to Peru, Mexico, and Costa Rica.

Norm:

Your artwork has been characterized as “large-scale photographic abstractions in color,” where you merge the fundamental characteristics of form, texture, color, and detail into a single layered vision.

How do you achieve this mesmerizing visual experience and what is your creative process like?

Jenny:

First of all, I think like a painter and a filmmaker.

Before photoshop I combined my images by projecting images on a wall from up to 24 slide projectors and then recording the wall of images in a large plate camera.

I also made images directly in camera by a method of exposing and advancing film in small increments to produce overlapping and superimposed images.

Now using Photoshop, I combine six or so layered images in a finished artwork. I place the images in the final frame shape and erase out all that is unnecessary. I like it when the final composition makes the viewer’s eye continually moving. Traditional photography deals with the conservative calming of compositions. Mine are often a balance between perfect and awkward.

Norm:

Over the course of your career, you’ve been commissioned by prestigious institutions like the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Tate Modern, and the Whitney Museum of American Art.

How do you approach commissioned projects while staying true to your artistic vision and style? How does it feel to make such a widespread impact and share your vision with people all over the world?

Jenny:

For commissions, I listen to the client and then give up to twenty ideas for them to choose from. One of the ideas will stand out to them and my job is done. By making so many to choose from I am really only pleasing myself with no restraints.

Norm:

Your artistic vision goes beyond conventional photography, as evidenced in Dreamscapes and Variations. Can you elaborate on your creative vision for the books and what you want readers to gain from them?

Jenny:

I have mainly had gallery exhibitions of architectural photographs. Layered Landscapes represents fifty years of artwork that has hardly ever been seen.

Michael Webb an architecture writer came to my studio and saw the pile of landscape images and insisted he help me find a publisher. Michael made an introduction and it took a year to gather the contributors notes. I tried to compliment the images with ideas about landscape. It was fun to read about other people’s personal relationship with landscapes.

Norm:

Layered Landscapes: The Photographic Art of Jenny Okun is your latest book, which features essays about landscapes and environmental concerns. How do you use your art to convey a message about our relationship with nature and the environment?

Jenny:

I want to make images that are piercingly beautiful and precious to the environment. Some landscapes have vanished already and will never be the same. I am interested in how we cherish our world. I am not a wordsmith or a politician.

Norm:

As an artist who constantly challenges the limits of photography, how has technology been instrumental in your creative journey, allowing you to create more refined impressions and transcend conventional photographic constraints?

Jenny:

I love new technology. I was commissioned by the composer Drew Shnurr to participate integrating music and augmented reality. Six composers picked six of my images for their compositions. My images were then projected on six 8 x 10 ft screens. Using special goggles to view the photographs the audience could see superimposed musicians playing instruments. The audience could also alter the musical sequences.

All new technologies radiate new ideas. As with the camera, it is not the camera but the artist who makes the image.

Norm:

In addition to being a photographer, you are a filmmaker as well. How does your filmmaking experience influence your photography, and do you seek inspiration from one to enrich the other?

Jenny:

My photographs are like still films: overlapped and in sequence. My films are like photographs: superimposed long fade-in and fade-outs. There is movement in my photographs and stillness in my films. I have made films with stills and movement and music and poetry. The images talk to each other in a non-narrative way. I make films to illustrate the photographic sequence in my opera projections. Film and Photographs are almost identical twins.

Norm:

What projects or themes are you looking forward to exploring in your future work and how do you see your artistic journey evolving?

Jenny:

I have 230 artworks in early stages from my Antarctic voyage and probably it will take me a year to finish enough good ones for a show. Each finished artwork can take up to thirty hours to make. You have to throw up a lot of ideas in the air to produce ten good works for a show. There is no formula to predict how the mind will behave. That is the fun of it.

Norm:

Where can our readers find out more about you and Layered Landscapes: The Photographic Art of Jenny Okun?

Jenny:

I have a website: jennyokun.com which has information about my drawings, photographs, films, operas, music and even some sculptures.

Also Instagram: [@okunjenny](https://www.instagram.com/okunjenny)

And the publisher:

www.oroeditions.com

Norm:

As we conclude our interview, what advice would you give to aspiring photographers and artists looking to make their mark in the art world, given your significant recognition as an artist?

Jenny:

Use your eyes more than your ambition. Satisfy yourself and show us what you see. Find a vehicle for your work only after it is finished. Never stop. This is how our culture moves forward.