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He May Be Blind, but Craig Royal's Photographs are Quite a Vision

Legally blind photographer Craig Royal wins Florida Museum of Photographic Arts' "Best of Show."

By [Deborah Bostock-Kelley](#) [Email the author](#) 2:50pm [Print](#) [0 Comments](#)

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As a photographer, an artist's vision is invaluable. Photography itself is a visual art with the camera intended to mirror the workings of the human eye. Take away the gift of sight and does it become an impossible task to effectively capture images in digital photography?

Not so proves [Craig Royal](#).

Craig is a legally blind digital photographer since 2007 and with no formal training, the winner of [Florida Museum of Photographic Arts](#) "Best of Show" 2011 photography competition for his image *Reflection Abstract 80*.

Royal's vision loss is due to a congenital form of optic atrophy. His peripheral vision is blurred (20/400 corrected) and the central vision is obscured by a white blind spot.

Royal, previously a woodworker and sculpture, will not let his disability define him or impact his ability to capture beautiful animals, architecture and abstract digital images with his Nikon D90 DSLR camera.

His work will soon be showcased on consignment at [Great Art & Frame](#) for the next two-three months.

"He has such an interesting way of putting dimension and texture and things that are familiar, yet not familiar in his photos," said Joose Hadley, co-owner Great Art & Frame. "Most photographers are more literal, Craig is more interpretive."

Patch recently sat down with Royal to discuss his passion behind the camera.

PATCH: How did you get into digital photography?

Craig: (It came out of) frustration working in three-dimensional furniture and sculpture. With photography it was much more immediate. With auto focus lenses I didn't have to focus. I could let the camera do it and that was a real stress reliever.

PATCH: What is your favorite thing to photograph?

Craig: Reflections on water. They have a really intriguing abstract quality to them the way I photograph them. I use a slow shutter speed that allows the reflection to expand and it takes on a three-dimensional quality. Some patterns have a Rorschach-esque test feeling about them. They may suggest a form and I will go into to Photoshop and manipulate to make it more obvious.

I like the ambiguity of abstract. There's a more suggestive quality about it, more for your imagination to play with. I love reading people's comments on Facebook of what they see (in his photographs). It gives me a different perspective, something I may have never thought of before.

PATCH: Have you ever won a competition for your photography before?

Craig: This is the first award I've ever won in photography.

PATCH: What was your reaction to winning the Florida Museum of Photographic Arts "Best of Show" photography competition?

Craig: I didn't go to the reception, but someone that I know emailed me the judge's decision and I was stunned. Another friend Teresa Trubilla emailed me a link to the category winners in the show. The following day the museum called and said that one of jurors purchased the picture. That was another big surprise – kind of like icing on the cake.

PATCH: What are some of the challenges you face with visual impairment?

Craig: Taking a bunch of pictures and then you get home and realize they are all out of focus. I really can't tell on the LCD screen on the camera.

PATCH: It's a strange question, but with optic atrophy, are there any advantages for you as a photographer?

Craig: For me personally, it allows me to see detail. My peripheral vision is blurred so I am able to focus in on something incredibly small and watch what goes on in that little space. The amount of content and detail really amazes and excites me. The elements – wind, water, and light – produce such beauty.

You don't realize what's going on when you just walk by it. Capturing things in slow motion, the camera opens up a different visual reality than what everyone is used to.

PATCH: Do you use any special photography techniques or equipment?

Craig: If you're visually-impaired, Photoshop is great. You can blow things up, look at detail, see if the image is in focus or not and manipulate things to your heart's content.

PATCH: Do you have any words of wisdom to budding photographers?

Craig: Jump in. Take a course if you want or go online. There are a lot of tutorials to learn photography on your own. Experiment and don't be afraid to manipulate images.

Don't let a disability get in the way of your creativity. Don't ever think you're not capable.

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