

RI INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL NEWS

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Rhode Island International Film Festival

LOCAL ARTISTS PRESENT GALLERY EXHIBIT DURING 2006 RHODE ISLAND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

**ROGER LEBRUN PRESENTS EXHIBIT "FRINGES OF WAR: VIETNAM, 1969;"
COLLAGE ARTIST, JULIEN PENROSE PRESENTS "LIFE'S MOMENTS."**

(PROVIDENCE, RI) The 10th annual **Rhode Island International Film Festival** (RIIFF) will be exhibiting the photography of Professor Roger LeBrun and collage artist Julien Penrose in the upstairs of the Columbus Theatre Arts Center, 270 Broadway in Providence. A vector-borne disease specialist at the University of Rhode Island and a combat medic during the Vietnam War, LeBrun's exhibition entitled "Fringes of War: Vietnam, 1969" will present his images of abandoned Amerasian children living in a Buddhist orphanage, as well as other poignant photographs of atypical non-combat war scenes. Penrose's work is an assemblage of moments from his life, literally and figuratively; created from a large library of collected and found materials

The exhibit is part of the **Rhode Island International Film Festival** which takes place August 8th through 13th, 2006.

THE WORK OF ROGER LEBRUN

Drafted into the Vietnam War in 1969 as a MedCap combat medic in the 1st Air Cavalry Division, LeBrun was sent to care facilities installed at Catholic and Buddhist orphanages in Vietnamese villages to treat unwanted Asian and Amerasian children. For LeBrun, a Buddhist orphanage outside the town of Phuoc Vinh became his personal "eye of the storm". "Separate, scattered and apart was the daily military life around this peaceful center," states his website.

"What is arresting about LeBrun's images is their ability to capture joy, peace, beauty, compassion, and safety in the midst of war-torn Vietnam," said Demetria Carr, RIIFF's Event Manager and Office Director. "In one photograph entitled

'The Enlightened One,' a child smiles with a sense of deep joy that is difficult to imagine coinciding with poverty, wartime, and abandonment.

"In this way, the images remain uplifting and moving, in spite of the grim context in which they were taken."

LeBrun's abandoned children, terrified soldiers, Vietnamese women who, by force of will and courage find a way to survive a war they did nothing to create—all these stories show a side of war that is seldom noted in retrospectives. His photos capture not blood, bombs, bullets and battles, but quiet time, spent "on the fringes of war", where the toll taken by the war is as clear as the presence of an undeniable human spirit.

The photos of the children in the orphanage, in particular, are heartbreaking and inviting at the same time. We are deeply saddened by their grim circumstances and slender prospects. It is easy to imagine adopting any of these children and loving them as our own. LeBrun wanted to open people's eyes to the War's vulnerable Vietnamese—especially children—those who felt the horror and pain of war as karmic reverberations. "These are just the edges of war; that's what I wanted to show," he said. LeBrun doesn't want to "whack people over the head" with these images, but he does hope people will see that the victims of War are truly incalculable.

Ironically, these photos remained undeveloped as negatives or in metal canisters for 35 years. When his wife, Kathleen, died last winter of breast cancer, LeBrun decided to unloose the ghosts of the past. With the help of a friend, the canisters were unearthed and the visual contents revealed these images—powerful, transcendent memorials to LeBrun's Vietnam experience. Their emergence, weirdly coinciding with today's War on Terror, encourages a resurgent cultural reflection on the scarcely-learned lessons of Vietnam.

Reflecting on his own work as a self-taught photographer and the images he captured during the war, LeBrun quotes James Nachtwey saying: "For me the strength of photography lies in its ability to evoke a sense of humanity. If war is an attempt to negate humanity, then photography can be perceived as the opposite of war...and if it is used well, it can be a powerful ingredient in the antidote for war."

ABOUT ROGER LEBRUN

Roger LeBrun, Ph.D. has been a photographer for most of his life. Documenting everyday events as they unfolded before him, he became aware of the importance of the concerned photographer. Drafted into the Vietnam War as a combat medic in 1969 during graduate study at Cornell University in 1969, he carried with him a Konica pocket camera loaded with black-and-white film to capture his experiences, with the hope that the images would spark social change. After the war, LeBrun completed his graduate studies at Cornell and was appointed to the faculty of the University of Rhode Island. He is currently the Carnegie Professor of Life Sciences at the College of the Environment and Life

Sciences of URI where he works with graduate and undergraduate students in vector-borne disease. In addition to teaching, LeBrun is director of graduate programs in the College of the Environment and Life Sciences and director of the URI Laboratory for Invertebrate Pathology. His recent research has focused on diseases transmitted by ticks and mosquitoes, especially Lyme disease, West Nile virus, and eastern equine encephalitis. Next summer, LeBrun will return to Vietnam for the first time since he left in 1970 as a Fulbright Senior Specialist on emerging infectious disease at the National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology in Hanoi.

THE WORK OF JULIAN PENROSE

Julian Penrose has lived in Brazil, Philadelphia, Newport, Los Angeles and Seattle, and currently resides in Providence.

According to the artist: "I have worked in this medium for several decades now, and find it a never ending amazement and introspection. I have recently moved from the Northwest, Seattle, to the Northeast, Providence, and have found much material and many events to draw from. The major portion of this show is from this transition period, with a few from the west, but mostly a new 'east coast' production.

"Most pieces on display are shadow boxes or hanging sculptural arrangements. The processes involved are; 'cut and pasting' from a collection of saved and found paper materials; application of transfer image, burnished from newsprint and magazine images; and incorporation of salvaged objects by gluing or nailing. Through the fashioning and juxtaposition of unrelated materials, objects, and ongoing personal journalism, the work unveils glimmers of irony and satire, beauty and truths, in 'life'."

Penrose has defined his work as 'ecological,' reducing material from the 'waste stream' by re-using it. His goal has been to show how 'trash' can be presented elegantly; to be attractive and meaningful.

Penrose's artworks have strong architectural context, and often it is noted they suggest the style of Joseph Cornell but are unique to themselves.

THE EXHIBIT

The LeBrun exhibit "**Fringes of War: Vietnam, 1969**" and Penrose's "Life Moments" will take place throughout the **Rhode Island International Film Festival** dates, from August 8-13, 2006, in the second floor galleria of the Columbus Theatre Arts Center, located at **270 Broadway, Providence, RI.**

Prints of all photographs will be for sale by the photographer as well as the Penrose collages. All proceeds from sales from the work of Prof. LeBrun will go directly to **Doctors Without Borders** for their humanitarian efforts in Darfur in the Sudan.

Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) is an independent international medical humanitarian organization that delivers emergency aid to people affected by armed conflict, epidemics, natural or man-made disasters, or exclusion from health care in more than 70 countries. LeBrun's photography and Penrose's collages will also be shown in the display window outside **Gallery Z** on Atwells Ave, Providence, RI.

The **Rhode Island International Film Festival (RIIFF)** is dedicated to the creation of opportunities for artistic interaction and exchange among independent filmmakers, directors, producers, distributors, backer, and the film-going community. Rhode Island Governor Donald Carcieri, Providence Mayor David M. Cicilline, and US Senator Jack Reed serve as honorary chairs to this year's event.

The **Rhode Island International Film Festival** is supported in part by the *City of Providence, the Providence Tourism Council, the Providence Department of Arts, Culture & Tourism, Clear Channel Communications, Sony, Rule Broadcast Systems, WJAR TV 10, the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts, Amtrak, Providence Monthly, Motif Magazine, Radio Disney, Feinstein IMAX Providence Place,* and contributions from members and community supporters.

The Flickers Arts Collaborative, an organization with 24 years of experience presenting major artistic events as well as independent and foreign films to the public, produces RIIFF.

Advance ticket sales for screenings and special events are available through the RIIFF website (www.RIFilmFest.org). Student, group, and senior discounts are also available but only in advance. To purchase tickets or obtain more information about any aspect of RIIFF, call 401-861-4445; or write RIIFF, 268 Broadway, Providence, RI 02903; email info@film-festival.org. or log onto www.RIFilmFest.org.

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