

Gerald Hawk, *Natural Obscurity*, The Great Highway Gallery, 1/29/16. "My work is about capturing the mystical significance of nature. Being in nature inspires me to capture the wonder I have always felt there. My photographs attempt to reproduce this otherworldly experience."

These are color iPhone images, most starting with a double exposure app and then processing further with additional apps. The majority are 4"x4", with a few 6"x6" and 8"x8". All are frameless mounted between a board and Plexiglas. Three dozen or so are mounted in a clustered group on each of two facing parallel walls, leaving a large portion of the walls as blank white. These photographs are in various stages of "abstraction."

A photograph is generally believed to record what is in front of the camera. This recording is influenced by the photographer's decisions, the materials, and post processing, especially in this day of digital images. As a photographic images approaches abstraction the viewer is often searching for an explanation of the original scene. It is not the maker's responsibility to satisfy this curiosity, but it does sometimes get in the way of the viewer seeing the artwork. The more successful of these images do reach a state otherworldly experience yet are recognizable scenes. However, many of the pictures reach neither this state nor pure abstraction: they become a sort of colored mush.

Size impacts the viewing experience. Aesthetically, large sizes can help create a feeling of immersion in the image, and small size can create an intimate and precious feel. In the case of *Natural Obscurity* the small 4"x4" images are just difficult to view.

The rate of creating photographic images has been accelerating since 1839. Paper and metal images were replaced by reproducible wet plate negatives; they were in turn replaced by dry plates, then film, and now digital images. Technological advancements dramatically reduced the effort needed by the photographer. Modern cell phone cameras can hold more images than the entire career of a pre-1900 photographer. Art and science have made great use of photography, but the majority of photos have been made to record the world, individual lives, or to sell something, i.e. the snap shot, memories, art picture express the maker's life, and of course advertising. The phone camera and the ability to instantly broadcast images seems to be creating a new use for images, the communication to others that: "I am living my life now", "Here I am with my friends in front of...", "See what I am having for dinner", and so on. These are more about the affirmation and celebration of life today than future memories. After a few years, the cell phone camera owner will have tens of thousands of images, which will become memories?

