

Photolucida, April 23-26, 2009

by Aline Smithson

Every two years, the Benson Hotel in Portland, Oregon becomes home to 160 photographers, 60 reviewers, and an army of hard working volunteers. [Photolucida](#) is an amazing photography portfolio review that spans four days in April. Participants share their work with book publishers, gallerists, curators, editors, and festival directors in timed sessions, gaining exposure and relationships that are quite remarkable. This process is totally unique to the world of fine art photography.

Portland is primed and ready for the event. A well organized photography community allows for tremendous support and involvement by the local galleries, including many members of the [Blue Sky Gallery](#), including [Christopher Rauschenberg](#), [Laura Russell](#) from [23 Sandy Gallery](#), and [Laura Valenti](#) from the [Newspace Center for Photography](#). The Photolucida board is spearheaded by the lovely [Laura Moya](#), who works tirelessly in her efforts to support photographers. Other members (including gallerists mentioned above) are [Shawn Records](#), [Jim Lelsy](#), [Cherie Hiser](#), [Stu Levy](#), and [Bryan Wolf](#), all bringing years of experience as photographers, educators, publishers, curators, and consultants to the planning.



picture by Mary Virginia Swanson



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Photolucida provided a myriad of opportunities for the participants. Besides the daily portfolio review sessions, the event offered lunch time and evening lectures and a portfolio walk at the [Portland Art Museum](#) on Thursday evening. Open to the public, the portfolio walk allowed reviewers and fellow photographers to see a broad range of work by the participants over a three hour period.

In addition to all the activity in the main ballroom, another ballroom was provided for portfolio sharing of a different kind. "Roving reviewers" wandered the room to look at work, and photographers took this opportunity to share work with each other. And if that wasn't enough, the hotel lobby, balcony, and bar were filled with photographers and reviewers spending time together.

On Friday evening, [Albelardo Morell](#) lectured at the Portland Art Museum; Saturday night was set aside for many gallery openings including [Albelardo Morell](#) at the [Blue Sky Gallery](#) and [Susan Seubert](#) at the [Froelick Gallery](#). Also taking place on Saturday night was the [Sideluck Potshow](#) at Northeast Portland's Sandbox Studio. Sunday night culminated in a party held on the rooftop of the Blue Sky Gallery.

Photolucida is truly a special event for fine art photographers. Participants come away with a deeper knowledge of the fine art photography world, a roster of connections, feedback on their work, possible new opportunities, many new friendships, and enough inspiration and motivation to carry them to the next

Photolucida event in 2011!

I would be remiss to not highlight another fantastic program that Photolucida offers. [Critical Mass](#) provides participants "with career-building opportunities and to promote the best emerging and mid-career artists working today." Each year, photographers submit a body of work to a committee of 25 jurors, and 175 top semi-finalists are determined. Then approximately 200 photography professionals (curators, editors, gallerists) vote and select a top 50, and from that 2 or 3 photographers receive book awards resulting in monographs. Everyone that submits to Critical Mass receives



copies of the books. Critical Mass provides tremendous exposure for the finalists and often sets careers in motion.

A number of photolucida participants are also featured on my blog, [Lenscratch](#).