

MANTEL PIECES

A PORTFOLIO EDITED BY JEFF KIDA

ART IS SUBJECTIVE. That's why it takes so long to figure out what photograph to put on our cover. Or which images to include in a portfolio. Jeff Kida, our photo editor, is often drawn to photographs for their composition or their counterintuitive approach to a familiar subject. But Keith Whitney, our creative director, usually makes his choices based on what works best in a layout. And no matter what we choose, we inevitably get a call from the photographer saying something like, "Hmmm, I'm surprised you selected that shot." It's the latter point that drives this month's portfolio, which we've been calling "The Fireplace Collection." The gist of it is simple. We asked 12 photographers (one never responded to our request) to tell us which of their images they'd put on their mantel. Not necessarily their best photo, from a technical or artistic perspective. And not necessarily their most well-known photo. But the one photograph that they'd put front and center. "A photographer is like a cod," George Bernard Shaw said, "which produces a million eggs in order that one may reach maturity." It's *that one* that we were after. That one photograph that our contributors would like to look at every day. They came through, of course, as they always do, and in the process, they made our job a little easier.

— Robert Stieve

PAUL GILL

Ash Creek, Galiuro Mountains

"This image holds a lot of meaning and memories for me. Ash Creek has not been overrun by photographers, and only a few hikers visit its hard-to-reach canyon, so I can explore and work uninterrupted for days. Luckily, I happened to visit in 2019, at the peak of fall color. This shot's complementary colors just grabbed me and forced me to slow down and saturate my soul for hours, and I ended up having lunch on the rocks. To this day, this image takes me back and gives me a warm feeling every time I light a fire in my fireplace."



CLAIRE CURRAN

Moran Point, Grand Canyon

“The day before I made this shot was the first time I had used my new lightning trigger, and I caught some stunning lightning images. On this day, I went to Lipan Point, on the South Rim, as lightning from a monsoon storm rolled in fast, but I ended up moving to Moran Point to put distance between me and the lightning. The beauty of the sunset, the rain pouring into the Canyon and the power of the lightning were mesmerizing. This bolt broke the spell, and I regained my sanity and raced back to my truck. I love this image because there’s so much to see: the wash of magenta over the Canyon, the clouds, the setting sun and those frightening fingers of lightning that culminate in an eerie hook. What an afternoon.”





ADAM SCHALLAU

Colorado River, Grand Canyon

“This was made on my first river trip through the Canyon, and it captured a wonderful memory. I had climbed to a ledge above our camp to photograph early morning light. It was an incredibly peaceful moment as I sat there alone, listening to a canyon wren singing somewhere down below. There was a thin layer of fog on the river in the distance, and as soon as the sunlight began to hit the river, the fog burned away and I was able to make this one photo. At that point, I knew I’d be coming back. The river had captured me.”

BRUCE D. TAUBERT

Near Bartlett Lake, northeast of Phoenix

“I grew up in Wisconsin, where fireplaces were a necessity during the many cold nights. After dinner or on weekends, family and friends would gather around the burning logs to hash out the next day’s activities or discuss the day’s events. More often than not, we talked about the wildlife we enjoyed — often deer, pheasants, rabbits or waterfowl. Fireplace mantels often were adorned with portraits of our favorite animals. I chose this image of mule deer because I can look at it daily and not get tired of its beauty, but also because I believe guests will let their eyes roam from the beautiful sunset to the tender doe and fawn and enjoy it as much as I do. It’s a relaxing scene that eases the mind.”





JOEL HAZELTON

West Clear Creek Wilderness

“I chose this image because it calms me. The abstract quality of the composition allows my brain to settle into the patterns and shapes in the canyon wall and the symmetry in the reflection. Getting lost in an image like this helps me feel peace and balance amid the anxiety and stress of everyday life.”



SUZANNE MATHIA

White Stallion Ranch, Tucson

“I’ve always loved this image, and I could live with it every day. The morning backlight on the ranch’s horses evokes a moment of peace and calm, and the horses themselves are powerful, yet gentle. I especially love the colors and tones of this scene, as well as the many memories it brings back. It’s also a favorite of my horse-obsessed granddaughter, who has it hanging proudly on her bedroom wall.”

GARY LADD

Colorado River, Grand Canyon

“I selected this image because it’s free of all photography contrivances. No technique was needed. It’s simply a great landscape caught with pleasing clouds, river color and illumination. It was a gift to a guy with a camera.”





REBECCA WILKS

Watson Lake, Prescott

“Some photographers say there are two ways to approach landscape work: with a great deal of planning, or mostly spontaneously. More often, I do the latter, but I planned this one. I used smartphone apps to determine when the full moon would set just after sunrise and at the right angle. That turned out to be in November, when the cottonwoods around Watson Lake were at peak fall color. Even though it required a 30-minute walk in the dark in 20-degree temperatures, this image brings to mind a special memory. I kayak, hike and photograph regularly at Watson Lake, and it feels like home.”

EIRINI PAJAK

Near Florence

“I love exploring the desert in search of tiny treasures the morning after a good rain. On this occasion, I spotted this little mushroom, which was about a quarter-inch high and had a small aphid perched on its cap. The aphid was getting ready to take off, and I managed to make this photo before that happened. I can’t think of too many things I enjoy more than the desert after it rains. It is pure joy.”





MARK LIPCZYNSKI

Near Flagstaff

“I grew up photographing trains with my dad and brother as a hobby, and I also have ancestors who worked for railroads at the height of the industrial age. That foundation provided me with a career in photography and has gifted me with so many wonderful memories. During the pandemic, I began reflecting on my heritage, making long exposures of trains in different parts of Arizona and realizing how much my life has been shaped by the intersection of railroads, photography and family. To honor that legacy, I began exploring ideas of time and how to capture it in a single image, which brought me to an ongoing series that touches on trains as a sort of time machine that links me to my past. In looking at this image, I’m reminded of the significance that honoring the past, and those on whose shoulders we stand, has in the present.”

DAVID ZICKL

Colorado River, Glen Canyon

“I made this photo just below Glen Canyon Dam, and it shows river guide Amy ‘Cricket’ Rust, on the right, guiding the boat *Hetch Hetchy* through Glen Canyon. For me, this photograph has a sense of awe and wonder. All three boatmen seem to be on an endless journey with no particular destination. Remember what Lewis Hine said: ‘If I could tell the story in words, I wouldn’t need to lug around a camera.’” [AH](#)

