

COMPOSING OAKTOWN'S KASPER'S

The Oaktown series portrays a city of neglected impressions. The whole collection is intended to look at the hidden corners that actually distinguish this place from someplace else, that even typify it. You can pass through, and you're not noticing, but your mind is seeing, and storing, images. Those visual impressions that you're not giving attention operate subliminally; they are there in your unconscious, and they can surface and be at once surprising and strangely familiar. The scenery of the photos, then, can function like a dream; it composes all kinds of random images that you have stored and it presents them as an all-new or alternative narrative.

In "Storquest": for example, when I'm shooting, in my head the picture always starts out like a blank sheet of paper and everything you see is there because I put it there. That's an obvious thing to hear a printmaker or a painter say, but not a photographer, because of the 150-year history of people seeing and expecting photography as *recording*.

In "Golden Arches": I saw the sky as blue and the street as gray. Top half, bottom half, big red shape, and I pasted that on top of the blue and the gray. After I put the red thing in there, then I realized, to finish that off, I need to do a lot of yellow stuff above and a lot of white stuff below. It's an extremely simple approach to the composition. I have to build it. I build it in layers.

The question always is, am I seeing the graphics first, and then I accept or decide about the graphics because the content warrants doing that, or is it the other way around? I'm out in the world, I see commercial cacophony, political identity struggles, homelessness, architecture. All those things are subject matter. Anybody could come to this and decide to make pictures just based on that.

In "Safes – New Used": As usual when I start to shoot it, in the beginning I "see nothing" there. My mental view is just a blank slate. Then what I'm seeing in front of me is rectangles and lines. I'm asking myself, How am I gonna use that stuff? Where am I going to put the yellow line, where am I going to put the red and orange rectangles?

I start moving and moving, to change where they show up. I stand up on a concrete planter to get a different angle. In this instance, I also waited for almost 20 mins for that car to go away. It didn't happen. So finally I said, OK, I'm going to use the car, but how am I going to use it?

When I looked at the taillights and the orange street pylon on its side, then I had to back up so that the pylon wasn't at the bottom of the picture, and then I got the red curb, too, pointing right at the pylon. How much of the curb do I want?

The triangle shape on the right—I have the blue line of While u Wait at the left. Then, at the right, I was annoyed that the bikes weren't straight across. I had to move again to get the blue line of bicycles to angle such that that the bikes could frame the trees if I also put the power lines in the right place up top. To make sure that the wires worked correctly, I moved around until I made sure that the wires connected to the corner of the building. This flattened the picture, making it more 2-D than 3-D. That made it graphically much stronger without taking away anything else that was already working in the picture.