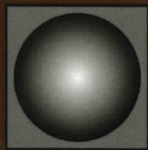


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Born in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1960, David Fokos was raised and schooled on the east coast, earning a Bachelor of Science Degree from Cornell University in Ithaca, NY. He went on to design high-end loudspeakers for home audio systems, and continued in that career for ten years.

A self-taught photographer, Fokos describes his education in photography as “pretty much 25 years of trial and error.” Conducting much of his early photography while on family vacations on Martha’s Vineyard, Massachusetts, he worked mostly in isolation. His chief source of technical information came from the classic photographic textbook *Photography* by London and Upton. After that he learned how to use a view camera and make platinum prints on his own. “As a nascent photographer it was impossible not to know the work of Ansel Adams, but as I continued to work I remained isolated from outside influences. I worked alone on Martha’s Vineyard and cultivated my aesthetic there.”

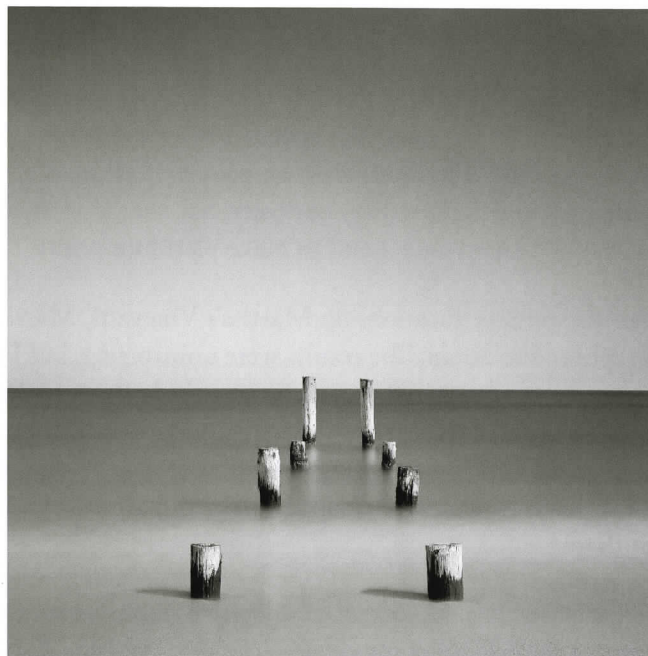
In 1996 Fokos moved to San Diego, California, where he makes his living as a fine art photographer.

An exhibit of Fokos’ work is being featured at the Bonni Benrubi Gallery in New York from January 8 to February 21, 2004. He is also represented by Paul Kopeikin Gallery, Los Angeles, and No. 4 Art Gallery, San Diego, CA, as well as eight other galleries in the U S.

**Web site:** Fokos’ work may be viewed at [www.no4gallery.com](http://www.no4gallery.com).

**Works with:** 8x10 view camera. Drum-scans negs into Photoshop. Lightjet analog printing.

# BASIC ELEMENTS



*by*

*Difur*

David Fokos

How many times are family influences responsible for seeding artistic interests? And how many photographers do you suppose took their first photographs with a Kodak Brownie? At the age of 11, just before I was to go with my family on a vacation to Hungary, my grandfather gave me a Brownie camera. As a child, that box camera started me on a path shared by many vacation-happy snapshooters. But it grew to be much more than that.

In 1979, when I left home for college to study electrical engineering, I was ready to leave behind the Spotmatic and made the leap to a 5x7 view camera. I had just read a quote from Stieglitz that “Platinum was the prince of all media,” which solved my darkroom dilemma and captured my curiosity. So, I set to work simultaneously teaching myself to use a view camera and to make platinum prints.

It was during family summer vacations on Martha’s Vineyard, Massachusetts, that I began photographing the ocean. The results were uninspiring, but I enjoyed being out in the sea air making pictures. Time and time again I photographed in the same places. Certain rocks became old friends. It was calming to be out there, alone near the ocean, setting up my camera and going through the ritual of making exposures. Unfortunately, my pictures were still disappointing. But all was not lost; I was just happy to be out there.

In those early days in my 20’s, almost all of my photographs were of the ocean, yet they failed to capture the essence of my experience. Then, late one day when the light was low, I was making one last exposure. While the shutter opened for 45 seconds the water worked in the foreground. It was with that image that I discovered the aesthetic that captured the emotional experience of being there. The “visual noise” was eliminated in the image; the meditative aspect of water was preserved. That epiphany was the result of serendipity. It was a gift. I had finally found what I had been looking for.

Now, more than 20 years later, I continue to create images with that quieter, meditative aesthetic. I enjoy distilling an image to its basic elements. It appeals to the engineer in me, and to my personal interests in perception, and how we each see our world.



