

Stephen Schiff Biography

I am told that as an artist I need to have a bio for the benefit of my customers. For a while, I offered to send one to anyone who contacted me and told me a little about themselves, but that did not work out. Ergo I am trying a new tack, one which hopefully satisfies your curiosity without compromising my personal information. So here goes.

Purely by accident, which is to say, not at all of my own doing, and therefore being cause for neither pride nor shame, I was born white, male and middle class in the mid-western US. For reasons that remain unfathomable, my parents moved to the deep south while I was an infant. Consequently, I grew up and received the first part of my formal education, i.e. through my baccalaureate, in that region. It took me many years to overcome the prejudices and provincialism I was immersed in during that time.

Apropos a Randy Newman song, I was a *...college man from {a state} U. Went in dumb, came out dumb, too*. In particular, I was too dumb to realize that going to Canada was an option in the '60s, so I went into the military. We (they and I) quickly realized that I was not at all suited to what I had signed up for, so they sent me to where I could do no harm. That's how I came to be, as folks back where I grew up would say, "in yankeeland".

I've worked mostly for scientific and engineering firms or as an independent technical contractor, completed an advanced degree plus taken many more courses, become almost fluent in a second language and passably good in two others. For a while, I was a race driver. Once my vision problems were taken care of, I resumed the pursuit of photographic-based art that I had begun as a teenager. I also dabble in other visual art forms when a suitable inspiration comes along.

You might be wondering about my art education. In short, I am self-taught. I spend a lot of time in art museums and Kunsthalle, learning directly from accomplished artists of many genres, periods, and nationalities. I am happy to admit stealing ideas from the very best of them. Incidentally, my technical background has been useful in my artistic pursuits, because it enables me to write imaging codes, inter alia.

I have reached the age where it is essentially impossible to find conventional employment, but I remain active in my profession; my latest paper, a scientific application of machine learning, was published in 2019, and I'm doing research on another, this time concerning the Covid-19 pandemic. I am also an international climate justice activist, and am engaged with like-minded fellow physicists in efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons and the technologies that make them possible.