

How I Came to Photograph What I Photograph

Having for nearly thirty years focused on self-portraiture in my painting and drawing, I bought my first digital camera in 2009 so I could have JPEGs for my then-new website. Before long, my early interest in photography, which had been hibernating for forty years, was reawakened. I began to photographically document my studio work beyond what I needed for my website -- for example, photographing works-in-progress and my studio furniture, palettes, and tools -- and to photograph whatever compositions or effects of light caught my eye in the rooms of our home.

I started carrying a camera whenever I went out. In the street, after decades basing my paintings and drawings on my reflection in my studio mirrors (I never painted from photographs), I was initially seduced by the possibilities of making photographs of myself reflected in whatever surfaces I encountered, with all the new, enticing, endlessly varying natural and artificial light.

My interests soon expanded into making photographs not related to my painted and drawn self-portraits, and although I was aware of the role of defined projects, story-telling, and cultural, political, or social concerns in photography, I felt most naturally inclined to make photographs in the street, image by image, individual works not intentionally related in any way.

One way I now think about my photography is this: As I seek images in the street without a message, narrative, or project in mind, I am aware that in the moment of my wanting to take a picture there is a complex interaction between my momentary frame of mind and my decades of looking at and reading/thinking/talking about painting, drawing, and photography. Moreover, this complex interaction is ever-changing; the weighting factors of whatever thoughts and feelings might be at play in the shutter's moment are fleeting, impossible for me to fully know and articulate.

Jeffrey Saldinger
April 2022