



Andy Ilachinski was born in 1960 and raised on Long Island in the small towns of Glen Cove and Sea Cliff, New York — about 25 miles east of New York City. In 1988 he earned a doctorate in theoretical physics from the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

Andy's interest in photography was sparked by a Polaroid camera that he received from his parents for his tenth birthday. "I was instantly hooked." He claims that "both by temperament and inner muse I am a photographer, and have been one far longer than my Ph.D. gives me any right to claim an ownership to physics."

His first serious investment in fine art photography came on the heels of winning a few academic prizes as an undergraduate. "I splurged on a Canon AE-1, a few lenses, a tripod — the *works* — then I took my first trip to Hawaii that year with my new gear. I have essentially been unable to go anywhere without a camera since."

Andy's natural curiosity, along with the artistic influence of his father, provided the groundwork for his photographic education. "My dad was not a photographer, but was an art restorer by trade and a lifelong and gifted artist in all other respects. He 'lived' art to the end — until he passed away in 2002. Everything I know about tone, light, composition, expression, and overall approach to art, I learned by being around my dad."

For photographic inspiration Andy looks to Ansel Adams, Minor White, Paul Caponigro, Aaron Siskind, Harry Callahan, Brett Weston, and Carl Chiarenza. He adds that "the *LensWork* DVD on Oliver Gagliani had a profound and lasting effect on me."

Andy lives in Northern Virginia (just outside of Washington, D.C.) with his wife, Irene, their two children, Noah and Josh, and a black Pug named Blotto. He works for a Navy think tank as a physicist specializing in the modeling of complex adaptive systems.

Website:	http://tao-of-digital-photography.blogspot.com
Works with:	Canon digital cameras. Prints are made on an Epson 2400.
Book:	<i>Landscapes of The Soul</i> (Self-published, March 2008) http://www.blurb.com/bookstore/detail/191201
Represented by:	Seeking Representation

MICRO WORLDS



by

Andy Ilachinski

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*An additional 59 images are included in LensWork Extended #76,
as well as an audio interview with the photographer.*

If being able to recognize and visually express “beauty in banality” is one of the core aspirations of fine art photography, I can think of no finer lesson than the one I was humbly taught by two small acrylic candleholders. Allow me to explain. My family and I were sitting down to dinner last fall. Nothing out of the ordinary; indeed, one might even say it was intimately *banal*. I had returned from a long day on photo-safari, capturing soon-to-be-forgotten photos of rocks and water. All I wanted to do was eat. But, as my fork was about to pierce the skin of a potato, my wife placed two small acrylic candleholders on the table, and then struck a match to light them.

The creative fire was lit. These two humble candleholders left me *dinnerless* that night. Without a word I rushed headlong for my tripod, hardly giving a thought to the morsels of meat and potato still dangling from my beard. For the next two months, this project consumed my time for virtually every weekend (and quite a few nights.)

About half of the images in *Micro Worlds* are from the two original candleholders. I experimented with other glass candleholders filled with various gels, hair goo, hand soap, afro gel, and such — causing a few eyebrows to go up at local shops. This experience taught me a valuable lesson in photography and the creative process that I rebuke myself for not having recognized earlier in life: that all the careful, analytical rumination and planning in the world can only take you so far, but no further. As a physicist, I must quiet my left brain so my right brain can be heard from time to time.

Of course, all of this work is being done in my dining room studio, where my photography is observed by Noah, my oldest son, who is nine. Noah has accompanied me on many photo safaris, and knows that I like to photograph out-of-the-way places, abandoned ruins, and such. When he was barely five I was driving him home from preschool when we stopped at a light. Noah leaned forward with a whimsical smile and said, “Hey dad, don’t you wanna pull over? Look, there’s a bunch of beautiful garbage over there for you.” (He was sincere!) Well, fast-forward four years and daddy is bent over a tripod taking pictures of “acrylic bubbles.” Noah wanders in peeling an orange and quietly settles into a chair. After a few quiet moments, punctuated only by his chewing and the click of my shutter, he finally says, “Dad, you know, before, I thought you were kinda weird when you were taking all those pictures of garbage.” I looked up and saw him looking at me with a smile. “Yeah?” I said, “and now you know it was all in the name of art?” “No dad,” he says, “now I think you’ve really lost it.” With that, my nine-year old got up and went back to watching SpongeBob with his five-year old brother, Josh. So much for art!





























