

ON THE COVER

Cotton Candy Sunset by Randy Bott

This article is based on a video interview with the artist on March 19, 2024.

Patience is an important, perhaps necessary, characteristic of a creative photographer. We may look quickly at a picture and not always consider the time, effort, energy, and commitment that went into capturing the composition and details that make a photograph memorable. Rarely would a striking photograph be created quickly. Rather waiting for the “right” light, for a person or animal to move in or out of the frame, and finding the exact best spot for the shot is a time-consuming and often mindful process. This patience, combined with curiosity and time to be fully aware of the environment, may pay off in outstanding photographs.

The photographer whose work is featured on this issue of *American Psychologist*, Randy Bott, believes that learning how to be patient has been critical to his art. *Cotton Candy Sunset* is a photograph taken from Kerry Park in Seattle, a small park in the Queen Anne Hill neighborhood known for its clear views of the city skyline, including the highly recognizable Space Needle, and the distant Mt. Rainier. Bott returns to this (and other locations around the Seattle area and across Washington state) regularly. He positions himself and waits, first for the actual setting of the sun, then hopes that the clouds will reflect new vibrant colors, and then finally, waits for the lights of the buildings to all come on. He uses “time blending,” capturing multiple pictures of the scene, and then makes minor adjustments in post processing to assure an evenness across the components of the picture.

By day, Bott is an oceanographer with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. He deploys and rebuilds

devices that monitor carbon dioxide (CO₂) levels, via buoys around the world. With these data, he is aware of changes in CO₂ and the increasing acidity of the oceans and its impact on shellfish and the climate. He is a self-taught photographer. About 7 years ago while climbing Mt. Adams, he was struck with the beauty of the Cascade Range mountains at sunset and lamented that he only had his phone to capture the scene. After purchasing a digital camera and completing one photography workshop, he took it upon himself to learn and refine photo editing techniques.

Bott smiles broadly asked about how he has time to be a photographer, noting that his job is very flexible and that he is readily able to balance two or three vocations in a region so rich in options for outdoor activities (he is an avid bicycle road racer as well). As an example of Bott’s approach and passion for nature and photography, he describes driving to explore new areas. When he finds a spot that has potential for a photograph, he may pull over to the side of the road and sleep in his car to be in what he hopes will be the optimal spot for morning light and beautiful photographs.

Cotton Candy Sunset elicits appreciation of the beauty of the northwestern part of the United States and the striking mirroring of the city built on seven hills with the majestic mountains. Appreciating the perceptions, patience, and skill of the artist, capturing its beauty adds further to our enjoyment.

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Art Editor