



ALBANY MUSEUM OF ART

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Contact: Jim Hendricks
Director of Marketing & Public Relations
229.439.8400
jim.hendricks@albanymuseum.com

PHOTOGRAPHERS TO DISCUSS WORK, WORSHIP & COMMUNITY AT AMA

Albany Museum of Art Event Features Panelists Mentored by Paul Kwilecki

[For Release April 15, 2021 – Albany, GA] — With photographs by the late Paul Kwilecki serving as a backdrop in the East Gallery, join the Albany Museum of Art for *Work, Worship & Community: A Panel Discussion on Race and Community* at **5:30 pm** on **Thursday, April 22, 2021**.

Panelists will include two photographers who were influenced by Kwilecki—Jimmy Nicholson, of Quincy, Fla., and William Boling, of Atlanta. The panel will be moderated by AMA Executive Director Andrew J. Wulf, Ph.D. The event is free and open to the public, but seating is limited in accordance with health guidelines. You can reserve your space by emailing **annie.vanoteghem@albanymuseum.com**.

“We are thrilled to be able to welcome photographers Jimmy Nicholson and Bill Boling for an intimate conversation about their work and thoughts on Paul Kwilecki, an original who championed community life he saw around him every day,” Wulf said. “In a time when celebrity worship has reached outlandish proportions, Kwilecki’s work serves as a gentle corrective for us all to pause and to witness, to borrow a title from the 20th century American composer Aaron Copland, these important images, his ‘fanfare for the common man.’”

Kwilecki (1928-2009) documented life in his native Bainbridge and Decatur County, but his work became well known far beyond those boundaries. His photographs in themed series captured fundamental human nature and the changes caused by the passage of time. He focused on the less affluent residents in his community and the marginalized, especially African Americans. Kwilecki said he only photographed subjects that he found to be “vivid and substantial.” A John Simon Guggenheim Fellow in 1981, his work is in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City and the High Museum in Atlanta.

Kwilecki’s photographs have been exhibited in Europe at the Museum of Palazzo Venetia and Les Rencontres D’Arles; in New York at the O.K. Harris and Robert Freidus galleries; in Washington, D. C. at the Corcoran Gallery; in California at The Friends of Photography in Carmel and San Francisco Camerawork; and at the New Orleans Museum of Art. A large archive of Kwilecki’s photos and writings

are held in the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Duke University. The photographs in *Work, Worship & Community: Photography by Paul Kwilecki* in the Albany Museum of Art East Gallery are from The Do Good Fund Collection.

"Paul Kwilecki was truly a hometown artist," AMA Director of Education and Public Programming Annie Vanoteghem said. "His work is proof that beauty can be found anywhere and in the most unlikely places, nothing that he captured in film is insignificant. We are so thrilled to have this exhibition and get a chance to hear from those who he influenced the most."

Boling is a Georgia based photographer, and the founder and publisher of Fall Line Press. He became friends with Kwilecki more than 25 years ago. With Kwilecki's support and encouragement, Boling has produced a short documentary film about Kwilecki and his work that will be released early 2022.

Nicholson is a documentary photographer who, like Kwilecki, only works with black-and-white film. The Do Good Fund has 45 of Nicholson's photographs in its collection. After taking a single introductory photography course during his studies at Florida State University, Nicholson returned in 1976 to his hometown of Bainbridge, where he was mentored three years by Kwilecki.

"I knew the family my whole life," Nicholson said in a recent phone interview from Mexico Beach, Fla. "I was living downtown, not far from where his studio was. I bumped into him one day, and he said, 'Why don't you come by and visit me?'"

Nicholson took him up on the offer, dropping by Kwilecki's studio at least once or twice a week.

"He was a good mentor," Nicholson said. "He changed my whole worldview on a lot of things, especially photography. He was a major influence on me. He definitely started me in the direction of taking photographs of people that had been traditionally marginalized."

Kwilecki gave him technical advice on photography and critiqued his work. "He didn't mince words," Nicholson said. "He was a straight-shooter."

Working with Kwilecki during that period enabled Nicholson to improve his skills. "He refined the quality of the printing and how to process the film," Nicholson said. "He taught me about the Zone System (a method for defining the relationship between the way a photographer visualizes a subject and the result). That cut my learning curve a lot."

Kwilecki also gave Nicholson a copy of *The Craft of Photography* by New York City photographer and educator David Vestal, with whom Kwilecki stayed in touch. A self-taught photographer, Kwilecki corresponded with Vestal and other professional photographers over the years as he honed his craft. Kwilecki often asked Vestal, known for his street photography and cityscapes, to critique his work, Nicholson said.

"He was one of his main mentors," Nicholson said. "I think he was the man who was instrumental in Paul giving up the hardware business and going into the photography business full-time."

Nicholson's own photography career is split into two periods that are separated by three decades. The first period began in 1974 and ended in 1982 when the increasing demands of work and a growing family (he and his wife have three children) forced him to put his camera aside for the most part. He picked it back up in 2013, a year before he retired at age 60. During the in-between years, he shot primarily family photos.

"I have basically become a photographer full-time," he said. "You have to have the time to devote to it. Paul would work six and sometimes seven days a week."

Nicholson said many of the people he photographed over the years were those he came to know through his father's grocery store. Those connections got Nicholson access to places like an African-Methodist-Episcopalian church in Climax that allowed him to photograph services and events conducted at the church.

"I just gravitated toward photographing people who weren't like me," he said.

Another aspect of his work that he shares with Kwilecki is his refusal to shoot digital or color images. "I shoot black and white," he said. "I'm strictly a film photographer. I don't do digital at all."

Kwilecki's work was within Decatur County, but Nicholson ventured into a wider area, from the Flint and Chattahoochee rivers to the Apalachicola River. He frequently shoots in Mexico Beach, where he and his wife spend about eight months of the year.

"I like to photograph life along the coast," he said. "So much of it is changing."

For weeks, he said, he photographed people beneath the Tapper Bridge near Port St. Joe. "There used to be homeless people under the bridge there, but the county put a stop to it," he said. "Now it's people just doing things, visitors from out of town and all. They come to fish mostly."

He hopes to start a new project photographing commercial fishermen working in the Gulf. "I'm hoping I can do it," he said. "I want to be on the boats. I want to be with them, not shooting from the shore or the pier."

During the COVID-19 shutdown, however, Nicholson had an opportunity to take a new look at his early work.

"One of the things I did starting last March, when COVID hit, was I went over some of my old work. I had photos I took but I never printed. I looked at them and said, 'Huh, I was a pretty good photographer!' I've been going back through those old negatives and printing things that I never had before."

So far, he's printed 150-200 images from that 1974-82 period. "That's been my pandemic lockdown activity," he said.

For more information about Nicholson, visit [@jimmy.nicholson.photographer](https://www.instagram.com/jimmy.nicholson.photographer) on Instagram.

For more information about Boling, visit www.falllinepress.com.

CURRENT AMA EXHIBITIONS

- *Butch Anthony: Art, Nature, and Intertwangleism* is in the Haley Gallery March 4-July 31, 2021.
- *Work, Worship & Community: Paul Kwilecki* is in the East Gallery March 4-June 26, 2021.
- *Educators as Artists: 4th College Faculty Exhibition* is in the McCormack Gallery March 4-June 26, 2021
- *Works by Tom Ferguson* is in the Hodges Gallery through April 30, 2021.
- *Escape Plan*, installation by Elinor Saragoussi, is in the West Gallery.

ABOUT THE ALBANY MUSEUM OF ART

The Albany Museum of Art is located at 311 Meadowlark Drive in Albany, Ga., adjacent to Albany State University West Campus just off Gillionville Road. The museum is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. The Albany Museum of Art is open to the public 10 am-5 pm Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and 10 am-7 pm Thursdays. Admission is free.

For more information about the AMA please visit our website, www.albanymuseum.com or call 229.439.8400. Be sure to follow the @AlbanyArtMuseum on Twitter, AlbanyMuseum on Instagram and AlbanyMuseumOfArt on Facebook.

MANDATORY PHOTO CREDIT:

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