

AZ Giving Spotlight: Bob Rink of Through Each Others Eyes

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Encouraging people around the world to understand and appreciate diverse cultures through photography is the premise behind the magic of the Through Each Others Eyes organization. After years of creating beautiful global photography, Through Each Others Eyes has now reached its 25th anniversary. Bob Rink, TEOE's Board President shared with us the vision and what the Valley can expect from them in the next few months.

AFM: How did the Through Each Others Eyes organization begin?

BR: Through Each Others Eyes began in 1988 as an artistic outreach of the Phoenix Sister Cities Commission. The commission that year sent two professional photographers from Phoenix to Japan to take pictures of Japanese life and culture, and invited two Japanese photographers to travel to Arizona to capture images of American life. The photo exhibit in February 1988 (one of many cultural and artistic exchanges featured in Phoenix's first Japan Week) was successful in its visual presentation of how two different cultures perceived each other.

In 1996, Through Each Others Eyes became a separate nonprofit organization, yet it has worked closely with the Phoenix Sister Cities Commission in establishing exchanges with photographers in the following sister cities: Prague, the Czech Republic; Catania, Sicily; Ennis, Ireland, and Chengdu, Sichuan Province, China. Currently our organization has on-going exchange programs with photographers in nine countries around the world, including Havana, Cuba; Edinburgh, Scotland; Baguio, the Philippines, and Zhenzhou, Henan Province, China.

AFM: What can audiences expect from the exhibit at the Shemer Art Center?

BR: The last of our three free local exhibits; it will be on display at the Shemer Art Center in Phoenix from May 1 to June 19. An opening reception will be held on Saturday, May 3 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. "Twenty-five years of Through Each Others Eyes: a Cultural Retrospective" is a 70-print photo exhibit featuring images from local and international photographers who have participated in photo exchanges. The photographers spend time in the host city, documenting through photographs, people and their daily lives: their work, relationships with each other, festivals and celebrations, and simple scenes of their surroundings and daily activities. The exhibit showcases photography from exchanges with Japan, Mexico, China, Scotland, Ireland, Cuba, Canada, the Czech Republic, Italy and the Philippines.

AFM: Why do you believe cultural photography is so important?

BR: As our world gets smaller, it's important that we get to know and understand each other. Through the medium of photography, Through Each Others Eyes is providing a window to a closer look at the daily lives of people in cultures different from our own. Through Each Others Eyes is currently planning its third "Exposure" event, which is our main annual fundraiser. This year's event will be held at the Heard Museum on October 25. The event will feature live music, international cuisine, a silent auction of prints by Through Each Others Eyes photographers, plus a live auction of photo experiences.

AFM: What are some of your goals for 2014?

BR: In 2014, Through Each Others Eyes will be initiating new photography exchanges with Cairns, Australia and Chengdu, China. We are also planning for an exchange with Grenoble, France as part of the celebration of the 25-year-old sister city relationship with Phoenix. Throughout the year, Through Each Others Eyes will continue to offer educational exhibits to schools, museums and libraries. We are currently in the process of developing an exhibit consisting of images of young children from other countries to be hung at the Children's Museum of Phoenix.

Another one of Through Each Others Eyes goals is to present two or more workshops to the public each year, teaching photo technique and offering insights on photographing different cultures. Exploring the World of Travel Photography: A Sense of Place was offered in February 2014. A second workshop - Roaming Arizona's Route 66: A Through Each Others Eyes Self-Drive Workshop is scheduled August 27-29.