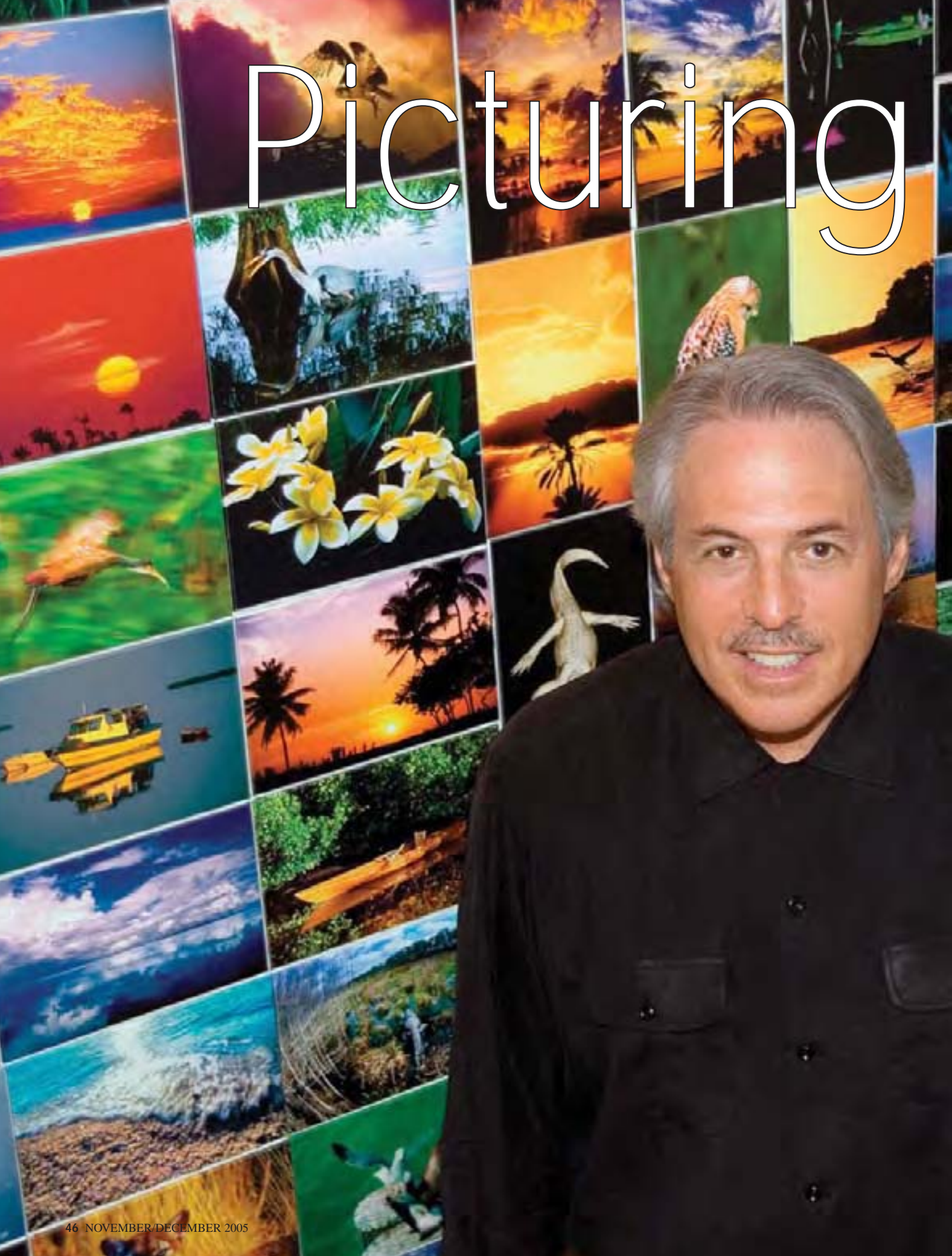


Picturing





Florida

Photographer
Alan S. Maltz
captures the beauty
of the Sunshine State

AMID THE MODERN architecture and recently installed carpeting in the new Midfield Terminal at Southwest Florida International Airport, travelers will find a colorful preview of the area in the form of sixty stunning images by award-winning Key West photographer Alan S. Maltz. Hanging in groups of four, the photos pay homage to the natural side of Southwest Florida, depicting secluded beaches, untouched landscapes, and exotic wildlife (including Maltz's favorite avian subject, the snowy egret).

Each image is six feet by five feet and is printed on high-quality art canvas to reduce reflections and emulate the look of an original oil painting. The photos are set against black backgrounds or are framed by the spectacular colors of the surreal sunsets and sunrises regularly conjured up by the Florida sky.

Maltz's work typically inspires ethereal descriptions such as mystical, magical, and otherworldly. But his photos, as a reviewer of one of the artist's early coffee table books once said, are "not somber, sensitive mood shots, but bright sprightly celebrations of tropical existence." For Maltz, they are personal artistic statements and, in a sense, love letters to his adopted home state.

"I am extremely passionate about my work," says this self-taught photographer who has garnered international acclaim and awards since taking up photography thirty-five years ago. "For me, it is a labor of love and the way I express my artistic vision. I only select subjects that are positive and uplifting, and I try to capture their essence and spirit in the most romantic light possible."

In person, Maltz is as likable and inspiring as his images. A soft-spoken, spiritual man with a quick sense of humor, he exudes a down-to-earth quali-

by Glenn Ostle

opening photo by Mellon Tytell



Maltz's *Vanishing in Time* depicts a storm gathering over a weathered farmhouse in Florida City. (Photo courtesy of the Alan S. Maltz Gallery.)

ty rare in people with such ample talent. "I try to be fresh each time I do something new," says Maltz, who begins each day with a run before arriving at his Key West gallery. "I tend to get ideas in droves, but I just try to take one idea and one day at a time."

A DEVELOPING TALENT

Born in Brooklyn, New York, Maltz attended Long Island University, where he received a degree in psychology. But it was an odd occurrence during his graduation ceremony that set him on his strange and, at times, mystical journey.

As he listened to keynote speaker Helen Hayes, he distinctly heard a voice telling him to "pick up a camera." Fortunately, he heeded this advice, bought a camera, and left the next day for Europe. He took his first photograph in 1970 in Marseilles, France. Even today the picture of an elderly man and woman greeting one another clearly shows his latent talent. He later spent four years in Morocco, perfecting his skills and learn-

ing to appreciate and work with various types of light, training that today serves him well as he photographs subjects in the ever-changing Florida light.

In 1977, Maltz came south to visit a friend and fell in love at first sight with the Florida Keys. Three months later he returned and bought his friend's house on Sugarloaf Key (about eighteen miles "up Keys" from Key West), where he lives with his wife, Leslie, to this day. Maltz's son, Rush, also lives in the area and works as a charter boat captain.

In addition to purchasing his home at a time when Florida real estate was somewhat affordable, Maltz admittedly has also benefited from a number of other wise investments, including the decision to buy the picturesque house on Duval Street in Old Town Key West that he converted into a spacious studio and gallery in 1999. Anyone who has ever visited Key West knows that Duval Street bustles with activity as the main artery through this vibrant tourist town.

The first floor of the house contains the main photo gallery as well as a sepa-

rate area where custom frames are designed and constructed. A 1,500-square-foot upstairs addition holds more gallery space as well as a production area where images are processed and printed.

In addition to Maltz's photographs, the gallery displays glass works by Marty Holmes and Gary Genetti as well as paintings of Maltz's photos by California artist Linda-Marie Monier. Also hanging in the second-story gallery is a series of signed and framed photos of Florida landscapes taken by photographer and museum operator E.G. Barnhill more than a century ago. "When I saw them, I liked the idea that Barnhill was doing the same thing I am doing today, but one hundred years earlier," says Maltz. "I just had to have them."

Maltz's wife, Leslie, owns a restaurant north of Key West but is an active partner in her husband's business. She is primarily responsible for the overall look of the gallery and has done much of the design work on Maltz's books. Other gallery members include Liz Young, Maltz's personal assistant; Jamie Chandler, head



Maltz opened his gallery on Duval Street in Key West in 1999.

framer; Cheryl Hare, sales associate; Jodi Bombace, designer; and Barbara Feinberg, a Cleveland, Ohio, transplant with a degree in industrial design who has been in Key West for eighteen years and has worked closely with Maltz for the last three and a half years. “It is a pleasure to work here,” says Feinberg. “Alan is meticulous and extraordinary at what he does.”

It is vital for the gallery to appear impressive and professional, as more than two-thirds of Maltz’s work is sold as a result of walk-in traffic. The rest is purchased by private, public, and corporate collections throughout the United States and can be found everywhere from Hallmark’s headquarters in Kansas City to the American Airlines Arena in Miami. The photographer has recently opened a second, smaller gallery at Hawk’s Cay Resort on Duck Key.

Maltz’s first large project was for Carnival Cruise Lines and resulted in twenty-eight of his photos decorating the cruise ship *Carnivale*. Most recently, he presented four of his photos to President Jimmy Carter; two for the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum in Atlanta and two more that will hang in the Carter home.

His photographs have been published in the form of award-winning books, beginning with *Key West Sunset* (1990) and *Celebrities of Nature* (1992). His *Key West*



A loggerhead turtle hatchling makes its way along Bonita Beach in *First Impressions*. (Photo courtesy of the Alan S. Maltz Gallery).

Color (1995) and *Miami City of Dreams* (1997) were both honored as “Best Coffee Table Book of the Year” by the National Association of Independent Publishers. Maltz’s latest book, *Florida...Beyond the Blue Horizon*, debuted at the Governor’s Conference on Tourism in August 2005. “I knew for the last three years that I wanted to do this new book,” he says. “It is the best one yet.”

Maltz’s work has also been featured in leading national and regional publica-

tions, including *The New Yorker*, *Robb Report*, *Playboy*, *Newsday*, *Booklist*, *Publishers Weekly*, *The Miami Herald*, *The New York Post*, *Gulfshore Life*, and *Florida Monthly*, which, in 2003, named him one of “21 Intriguing Floridians.” In 2003, he was also named official fine art photographer for Visit Florida, the state’s official tourism marketing organization, and was selected to photograph the international advertising campaign for the Monroe County Tourist Development



The Edge highlights Cayo Costa, one of the last undeveloped barrier islands on Florida's Gulf Coast. (Photo courtesy of the Alan S. Maltz Gallery.)

Council (which represents the Florida Keys and Key West).

The collection of images at Southwest Florida International Airport's new Midfield Terminal constitutes Maltz's largest project to date. "I was approached by D.T. Minich, executive director of the Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau, who had learned of my work through a mutual friend," Maltz says. "He came to visit the gallery and liked what he saw."

The original shot list included one hundred photos, sixty of which will hang permanently in the new terminal. The rest of the images will be included in a new large-format art book, *Visions of Beauty...The Beaches of Fort Myers and Sanibel*, that Maltz will produce for Lee County; it will be released in early 2006. All sixty airport images were printed and framed in the Duval Street gallery, a massive job that took months to complete.



PHOTOS BY GLENN OSTLE

More than two-thirds of Maltz's work is sold as a result of walk-in traffic at his Key West gallery.

FOLLOWING FATE

Considering the impressive results he achieves, Maltz's photographic technique is quite basic. He travels light and relies on his familiarity with his equipment and film to capture his images. He uses a relatively simple 35mm system, including Nikon F5 and N75 cameras and Velvia (50 ASA) film. He avoids using filters, except the occasional polarizer, and instead shoots very early or late in the day to capture the incredible shifting colors of the Florida sky. He relies on a tripod only occasionally and uses a relatively small number of lenses ranging from a 16mm fisheye to an 80–400mm telephoto lens. "Ultimately, it is the person behind the camera, rather than the equipment, that makes the difference," he says.

It is quite easy to understand why



Euphoria captures the excitement of the former Miracle Strip amusement park in Panama City. (Photo courtesy of the Alan S. Maltz Gallery.)

descriptions of Maltz's work tend toward the mystical. His photographs are so unique that some seem as though they should have been impossible to capture. The sky should never have blazed in some of the colors that Maltz has documented, and it seems virtually impossible that he could capture a streak of lightning with a single click of the shutter at just the right moment. And how likely is it that a snowy egret would lift herself off her nest just long enough to reveal her

bright blue egg? Maltz is the kind of photographer whose work causes people to scratch their heads and wonder how on earth he got that shot.

His response to all this acclaim is, like the man himself, muted and humble. "I am a very spiritual person," he says. "I believe things work in patterns and that everything happens for a reason. I also take each moment as it comes, and I am grateful for it."

"I have a basic business sense and a

good grasp for marketing," he continues. "But ultimately, I consider myself an artist from head to toe. And as I can't paint, draw, sing, or dance, I take pictures. I know I am very blessed to have this talent. It is my gift, my passion, my dream." 🦋

Glenn Ostle is a freelance writer and photographer and avid traveler whose work has appeared in publications such as Sport Diver, Scuba Diving, and Caribbean Travel & Life.

LASTING IMAGES

For more information about Alan Maltz and his work, visit www.alanmaltz.com. The Alan S. Maltz Gallery is located at 1210 Duval Street in Key West. The artist's recently opened second gallery can be found on Duck Key at Hawk's Cay Resort (794 Duck Key Drive, 305-743-3044).

As part of the project to produce sixty

photos to hang on permanent display in the new Midfield Terminal at Southwest Florida International Airport, Maltz created a limited quantity of commemorative portfolios entitled *Visions of Beauty* that include all of the photos in groupings of four, just as they will hang in the terminal. Each portfolio is handmade and slides into a heavy protective case

embossed with gold stamping. It can also be personalized for use as a gift or for your own collection. There are only a limited number of these portfolios remaining, which cost \$150. For more information about purchasing one of these portfolios or any of Maltz's books, contact the Alan S. Maltz Gallery at 305-294-0005.