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COVER STORY

PHOTOS CAPTURE AMAZING BEAUTY

Key West-based artist searches for diversity in Southwest Florida's unique environments

By **Cathy Chestnut**
Special to The News-Press

The photos focus on the unspoiled beauty and uniquely built environments of Southwest Florida.

Key West-based nature photographer Alan S. Maltz has been taking photographs since 1970, and his latest coffee table book, "Journey Through Paradise: Naples, Marco & The Everglades," (the book's narrative was written by local travel writer Karen T. Bartlett) takes readers on an amazing journey. The News-Press sat down with him recently to discuss his work, his life, and how Southwest Florida's beauty inspires him.

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"Open for Discussion" at Chokoloskee PHOTO BY ALAN S. MALTZ



COVER STORY



"Ripples in the Water," Marco Island PHOTOS BY ALAN S. MALTZ

Photos

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Tell me about how and where you got started. I was at my college graduation ceremony and heard a voice that directed me to "pick up a camera." The message was powerful and clear. Before that moment in time, I had never taken a picture or had any experience with art. I graduated with a degree in psychology. A few hours after hearing that message, I went to a camera store on Broadway in New York City and purchased a camera, film and a Kodak 101 basic photography book. The next day, I left for Europe with some friends, camera in hand.



"Shell Island"

We rented a car in Belgium and started to drive around. Three days later, we were in Marseilles, France. I had been

studying the 101 book and had enough information to attempt my first picture. I noticed a very European-looking older

MORE INFORMATION

» "Journey Through Paradise: Naples, Marco Island & The Everglades" is available from major booksellers and from the Alan S. Maltz Gallery in Key West. alanmaltz.com

» 144 full-color pages. Retail price: \$60. Published by Light Flight Publications (January 2014)

couple engaged in conversation standing on a street corner, rolled my window down and captured the scene, which I titled "Meeting in Marseilles." To date, it is one of my most talked-about images.

Why do you prefer this medium, and color? Color has

become part of my style and vision. Photography is the medium in which I can express myself as an artist (and not be embarrassed by the results because I can't paint, sing or dance) because there are no boundaries or restrictions. It is what I do best.

Favorite places you visited while working on this book?

I love Big Cypress and the Ten Thousand Islands. The outer islands off Marco Island are enchanting. I like the beaches and water areas in Naples, as well. Parts of downtown Naples make me feel at home, specifically by the water. When I am in that area, I stay at The Cove because it is a "mom-and-pop" atmosphere on

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COVER STORY

Photos

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the water by the city docks.

Do you have any favorite images in this book? From the new book it is "Sea of Dreams" (taken at Delnor Wiggins Pass State Park) because it takes me to a place far removed from reality, thus the name.

What is the most challenging aspect of your work?

Taking on the business end as well as being "the artist."

What is the most rewarding aspect of your work?

When I am in the field and one with nature. Magical things seem to always happen.

Why did you choose to explore the Naples/Everglades region of Southwest Florida? I love the area because it is so diverse and filled with beauty. It seemed like the next logical step after completing my fourth book, "Visions of



"Winging It" PHOTO BY ALAN S. MALTZ

Beauty — Fort Myers, Sanibel & Beyond."

That book was inspired by my Southwest Florida International Airport project in 2004-2005.

I am intrigued by the photo called "Winging It" taken in the Big Cypress featuring 15 black vultures, all in the same pose. Tell me about getting that shot. I was returning to the Keys from Naples and traveling on State Road 29 near the intersection of 41. I am always looking for images to capture while trav-

eling; it's my favorite way to shoot. In the book, it is referred to as DSS (drive, stop, shoot). I came upon that scene, slowly pulled over to the opposite side of the road, put down my window and started shooting. I was able to get off about a dozen shots before the birds noticed I was there and started to change positions. Only one image captured the birds with all of their wings in the upward position.

You opened your Keys gallery in the 1999. What were you doing before that?

I was doing anything that kept me in the profession, which included: advertising and architectural photography, aerial photography and even weddings (I used to dread them). In 1990, I published my first book titled "Key West Sunsets," which helped change the course of my career. I now have five coffee table books and two smaller volumes.

Why did you choose to be located in the Keys? In 1977, I was living in Woodstock, N.Y., when a friend invited me to his house in Coconut Grove. One

day, he, his wife and I took a drive to visit their friend who lived on Sugarloaf Key. When we arrived, I had a powerful *deja vu* experience. It's difficult to explain, but his house and surrounding area was very enchanting and struck something deep inside me. Long story short, I returned three months later and bought that house.

Tell me about your gallery.

Who are your customers? It is a large, multilevel gallery on Duval Street in the heart of Old Town. My clients are people from all over the world, including Asia, Europe, Australia and of course, the United States. My art is produced on aluminum, canvas and watercolor paper. We do most of the production in-house, including printing, framing and shipping. I have a staff of about 12 employees. My wife, Leslie, designs and does the layouts for my books as well as the gallery. We work as a great creative team.



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