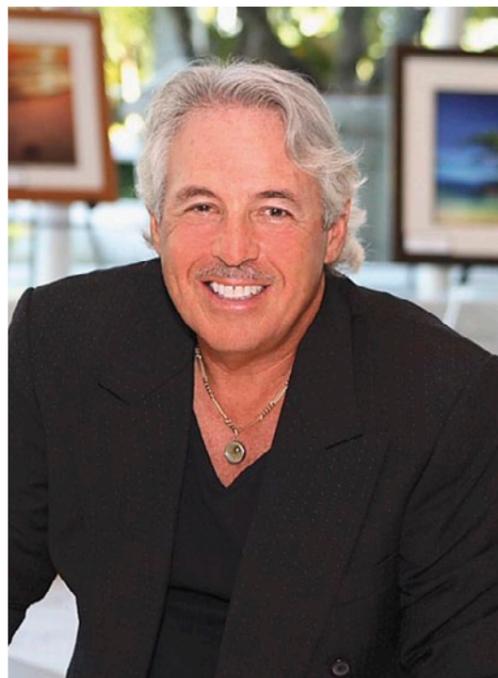


News Flash: Alan Maltz

Capturing the Keys' Essence in Passionate Photography



Maltz relocated to Sugarloaf Key from Woodstock, N.Y.

FLORIDA KEYS -- Key West and the Florida Keys have held the creative interest of photographer Alan S. Maltz for more than 30 years. Since 1977, he has indulged his passion for photographing the natural wonders and beautiful eccentricities that characterize the island chain — wandering far off the beaten path with his camera to capture faces, places, lavish or tumbledown houses and hidden haunts of birds and wildlife.

"My forté seems to be picking out the little nuances of every-day life," said Maltz, who was a freelance photographer in New York before falling in love with the Keys. "To me, that's where the art lies ... not in the obvious, but in the obscure."

In images gracing the walls of his gallery on Key West's Duval Street, Maltz depicts Florida Keys sunsets and sunrises, shadows and light, flora and fauna in vivid detail, unparalleled Keys colors and moments of visual serendipity.

In fact, he claims his middle initial, S, stands for "serendipity." Whether that's true or not, he allows both serendipity and inspiration plenty of room to influence his life and work.

Their influence was particularly strong the day he graduated from college. During a commencement address by legendary actress Helen Hayes, Maltz heard a voice inside his head say, "Pick up a camera." The following day he left for Europe, carrying a brand-new camera and beginning his journey toward photographic success and a life in the Florida Keys.

Maltz discovered the island chain when he visited a "friend of a friend" on Sugarloaf Key. Intrigued by the unique area, he quickly left his then-home in Woodstock, N.Y., and relocated to the Lower Keys island.

Since launching his professional career, he has been recognized repeatedly for the excellence of his work. Among other honors, he earned "best coffee table book of the year" awards from the National Association of Independent Publishers for his large-format photographic volumes "Key West Color" and "Miami City of Dreams." His later book, "Florida ... Beyond the Blue Horizon," was named the official coffee table book of Florida by the statewide Visit Florida tourism organization.

Maltz' evocative studies of birds and animals, ranging from noble-faced Florida panthers to graceful flamingoes in flight, earned him the title of Florida's official wildlife photographer from the Wildlife Foundation of Florida. In addition, Visit Florida designated him the state's official fine art photographer. Since 1999, he has maintained a gallery at 1210 Duval St. There visitors can view his vibrant photographs in large format, reproduced as giclee prints on canvas or watercolor paper and complemented by innovative frame designs.

Many pieces reflect Maltz' fascination with the ever-changing moods of the Florida Keys sea and sky at sunrise and sunset.

"I like to be on location and in place, ready to shoot, at least one-half hour before sunrise to about 9:30 a.m. and about two hours before sunset into twilight," Maltz said. "That is when the magic happens for me."

Equally intriguing to him are the quirky aspects of Key West and the Keys. When he's on the prowl with his camera, he seeks to discover the elements and attitudes that preserve the character of the island chain.

Among them, he says, are the easygoing acceptance, light-hearted flair and joyous embrace of eccentricity that are particularly prevalent in Key West.

"I look at Key West as a Mecca for free-thinkers," Maltz said. "It's not the physical-ness of it; it's what Key West attracts and who Key West attracts that make it special."

His most recent work stems from a project 100 miles north of Key West at Key Largo's prestigious Ocean Reef Club. He was commissioned to create a series of eight fine-art murals on fabric, some as large as 17 by 8 feet, for the club's conference and meeting venue.

Embracing a new creative direction, he chose a blend of sepia tones and muted color to give the images an iconic Old Florida feel. The result was so compelling that it inspired him to begin a similar collection of smaller pieces.

"The term 'Old Florida' generally denotes the way it was at least two generations ago, from the 1950s and earlier," said Maltz. "For me as an artist, it brings to light a feeling, a style and an essence."

These days, the images of Alan Maltz can be found in public and private collections and venues from Miami's American Airlines Arena to the Carter Presidential Library in Atlanta. Yet despite such success, he continues to focus on his art rather than its tangible rewards.

"Through the years I keep perfecting my technique, but my initial vision remains unchanged," he said. "The substance comes straight from my heart."



Maltz's 'Dramatic Ending' taken in Key West.



'Flats Fever - It's Catching Old Florida Version' in the Florida Keys backcountry.



'Bridging Night and Day' over Seven Mile Bridge, Pigeon Key and the historic Old Seven Mile Bridge off Marathon.



'Free Spirit' shot in Islamorada.