



Silver Eye Center for Photography  
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## Rosamond Purcell's Egg & Nest Photographs On View Now at Silver Eye

(Pittsburgh, PA) Silver Eye Center for Photography proudly presents ***Eloquent Eggs & Disintegrating Dice: Photographs by Rosamond Purcell*** on view **September 25 – November 29, 2008**. This exhibition features 45 vibrant color prints of eggs, nests, birds and dice. Internationally acclaimed artist Rosamond Purcell has photographed behind the scenes in the collections of major museums for more than twenty-five years. This Silver Eye exhibition presents new images that reveal the patterns of eggshells, the strategy of nest building, and the texture of plumage from the collections of the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology in Camarillo, California. Also on view are photographs of decomposing celluloid dice from magician and actor Ricky Jay's collection. Purcell's work seamlessly bridges the worlds of science and art. **Gallery Hours:** Wednesday, Thursday, Friday: Noon – 6:00 p.m., Saturday, 11:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. or by appointment.

The **Opening Reception** will take place on Wednesday, September 24, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. Members and students free; Non-members \$5.00. Refreshments will be served. Silver Eye Center for Photography, 1015 East Carson Street, South Side.

Rosamond Purcell is intrigued by the back rooms of museums, junkyards, and collections of everything from bird's nests to crumbling dice. Purcell's latest project, now on view at Silver Eye, took her to the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology (WVZ), which houses the largest egg and nest collection in the world. The WVZ is also a research and education institution dedicated to bird conservation. These photographs, which focus on the amazingly complex world of birds, are featured in Purcell's soon to be released Harvard University Press book, *Egg & Nest* (October, 2008). In a recent book review, American writer, Jonathan Safran Foer asks, "What kind of genius is Rosamond Purcell? Is she an artist? A scholar? A documentarian? A living cabinet of wonders? Her originality defies category, as does her newest triumph, *Egg & Nest*." Purcell will be coming to Silver Eye for a free book signing on Saturday, November 8 at 5:00 p.m.

It is an honor for Silver Eye to display the photographs of such a respected American artist. Curator and Executive Director Linda Benedict-Jones explains, "We are extremely fortunate at Silver Eye to be able to present the most recent work by Rosamond Purcell who continues to be one of North America's most impressive photographers. As both an artist and a scholar, she continually shows us things that we thought we knew but we see in an entirely new light thanks to her vision. Who among us has never seen eggs before, for example? Well, when people see her presentation of them in our exhibition, they'll never look at an egg, or a nest, or a bird in quite the same way again. Viewers in Western Pennsylvania are privileged indeed to have the opportunity to see these images before anyone else in the country, just as her newest book is being published."

**Rosamond Purcell** is a world-renowned Boston artist who has photographed for many years in natural history and anatomical collections. Her published works include three books with the late paleontologist and writer Stephen Jay Gould, and one with magician Ricky Jay called, *Dice: Deception, Fate & Rotten Luck* (2003). Her book *Owls Head* (2003), a meditation on the nature

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of dissolution of objects, is also a biography of William Buckminster, owner of a scrap-metal and antiques yard in Maine. *Bookworm* (2006), a retrospective of her photography, includes collages based on writing and books in derelict condition. Selected museum representation includes: The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The National Academy of Sciences, Washington, DC; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; Philadelphia Museum of Art; San Francisco Museum of Art; and Victoria and Albert Museum, London. She has also developed installations for several museums, including the Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales, Madrid; Getty Center, Santa Monica; and Schlesinger Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Rosamond Purcell uses her camera to transform the everyday ordinary into something extraordinary. She captures the diverse beauty, quirkiness and allure of eggs and the remarkable resourcefulness of birds. Purcell explains in *Egg & Nest*, "I am searching for the aesthetic and metaphoric ideas inherent in almost every natural history specimen, anywhere, irrespective of its scientific 'significance,' and even of any obvious beauty. Fortunately the act of pointing up those qualities does not usually obscure the science. How could it?"

The rich colors, lighting and textures make her photographs of eggs, nests and birds look three dimensional, as if one of the eggs could easily roll off the page. The surfaces range from the dotted lumps and bumps of the Guira Cuckoo eggs (*Guira Cuckoo (Guira guira)*, *Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology*, 2006) to the smooth and almost candy-coated bright shine of Tinamou eggs in a rough stone container (*Tinamou Eggs*, *Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology*, 2006). The framed archival inkjet prints in the exhibition are for sale and their purchases support both the artist and Silver Eye Center for Photography, which is a non-profit gallery.

Also on view at Silver Eye are six vibrant color photographs of disintegrating dice from sleight-of-hand artist and actor Ricky Jay's collection. Ricky Jay asked his friend Rosamond Purcell to photograph and commemorate his decaying dice collection before they fractured any further. These dice, made from celluloid, the first commercially manufactured plastic, typically remain stable for decades, and then in a flash begin to crack, crumble and implode. Jay explains in *Dice: Deception, Fate & Rotten Luck* (Quantuck Lane Press, 2003), "To record the death of my dice I called Rosamond Purcell, doyenne of decaying objects, photographer of taxidermological specimens, memorist of *Wunderkammern*. Her studio in Cambridge is bedizened with *objets trouvés* (found objects) in various stages of decomposition: Rescued sheets of discarded metal and weather-beaten books that are transformed – by design, by vision, by respect – into objects of great beauty. She has come to know my dice, she has scrutinized them. She has analyzed every nuance of shape and color. She has at once halted their disintegration and catalyzed their resurrection. The dice have never looked better." These pictures of stacked, crumbling, luminous dice are yet another example of the way Purcell is able to document everyday objects or artifacts and transform them into art.

The exhibition is complemented by several upcoming public programs, including: **Photograph Behind the Scenes at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History** on Saturday, September 27, 1:00– 4:00 p.m., **National Aviary Photographic Safari** on Saturday, October 18, 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m., **Portfolio Reviews with Ariel Shanberg of the Center for Photography at Woodstock** on Thursday, November 6, 5:00 – 8:00 p.m., and ***Egg and Nest: Book Signing with Rosamond Purcell*** on Saturday, November 8, 5:00 p.m.

**To request an interview with Rosamond Purcell and/or Linda Benedict-Jones, please call Amanda Bloomfield at 412/431.1810, ext. 12 or email her at [abloomfield@silvereve.org](mailto:abloomfield@silvereve.org).**  
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This exhibition is made possible by generous support from The Heinz Endowments.  
Broadcast media sponsorship is kindly provided by WYEP/91.3 FM.

Silver Eye Center for Photography is generously supported by the Allegheny Regional Asset District, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, The Grable Foundation, The Heinz Endowments, The A.W. Mellon Educational and Charitable Trust of The Pittsburgh Foundation, an anonymous donor, other local foundations and corporations, and our members.

The mission of Silver Eye Center for Photography is to serve the public through exposure to a wide range of work by locally, nationally and internationally recognized photographers. A Pittsburgh institution since 1985, Silver Eye Center for Photography is the oldest non-profit organization in Western Pennsylvania dedicated solely to the understanding, appreciation, education, and promotion of photography as an art form and as an expressive form of visual communication.

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