

Lawrence Hall Gallery

Rosemont College
[1400 Montgomery Avenue](#)
Rosemont, PA

N E W S R E L E A S E

For Immediate Release

Lawrence Hall Gallery presents “The Adobe Church Project, Built of Earth and Faith”: photographs by John A. Benigno

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"Santa Rosalia Church I, Moquino, New Mexico", © 2016

(Rosemont, PA, October 11, 2017): Lawrence Hall Gallery is pleased to announce a new exhibit featuring the work of fine art photographer, John A. Benigno. The exhibit features photographs from his "Adobe Church Project". The Opening Reception is scheduled for Thursday, November 30, 2017 from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. There will be an artist's talk at 4:30 p.m. The exhibit runs through January 12, 2018.

Lawrence Hall Gallery is located on the Rosemont College campus, [1400 Montgomery Avenue, Rosemont, PA](#). The gallery is open Monday through Friday between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m., or by appointment. For more information, please call 610-527-0200, ext. 2967.



"San Francisco de Asís Church IV, Ranchos de Taos, New Mexico", © 2004

John A. Benigno's "Adobe Church Project" is a visual narrative in the great tradition of documentary/fine art photography exemplified in the work of Edward Weston, Edward Curtis, and William Christenberry. Social, religious, economic, cultural, political, and natural forces all threaten these sacred buildings so deeply rooted in New Mexico's past.

In 2016, John was awarded The Luminous Landscape Grant from the Luminous Endowment for Photographers to continue working on his Adobe Church Project.

Tragically, too many traditional churches have been replaced, fallen into disrepair, or been plastered over with modern building materials. "While the social scientist in me appreciates the cultural alienation that attends modernization, the resulting neglect of these churches signals a growing disconnect between parishioners, their churches and their traditions. My objective is to photograph and document these endangered churches before they literally melt away, yielding to both natural and social forces."

The importance of place is a dominating theme in John's work. According to the photographer, "My passion for place developed from my educational background in the social sciences, especially anthropology and history."

In New Mexico, there are few places more telling of place than its adobe churches – especially those still overlaid in the traditional manner with either mud and straw or lime plaster -- which are quickly disappearing from the landscape. These traditional churches are the focus of his project. The remaining churches are monuments to the Native American and Hispanic civilizations that first settled New Mexico. They function as the metaphoric spine that binds the people of New Mexico to their religion, rituals, traditions, and culture.



"Santa Rosa de Lima Church I, Santa Rosa, New Mexico", ©2016

According to the photographer, when he first began this project some 15 years ago, he would tea stain silver prints in the darkroom. This makes the colored borders of the paper part of the print. The borders are symbolic of the earth, the source of adobe mud. Now, he replicates this process with his own techniques in Photoshop.

The antique look refers to a time when communities upheld and honored the traditions and rituals crucial to maintaining their adobe churches. It suggests an age when the community church was the religious and social center for towns and villages throughout New Mexico.

Among other venues, John's work has been exhibited at the Print Center of Philadelphia, the Art Association of Harrisburg, Villanova University, the Chestnut Hill Gallery, the Plastic Club of Philadelphia, and the Magidson Gallery in New York City. His work has been collected by the Lancaster, Noyes, Berman and Woodmere Museums, the Harry Ransom Center, and the State Museum of Pennsylvania; and published in "Camera Arts" and "Antietam Review". He teaches at the Main Line Center for the Arts.



"San Antonio Church I, Tajique, New Mexico", © 2011

Lawrence Hall Gallery is known to the area for its quality exhibitions, which feature artists of both local and international renown. Recent exhibitors have highlighted their talents through unique mediums, techniques, and use of the Gallery's space. Others have challenged viewers to rethink what they see and know.

The gallery is situated against the picturesque backdrop of Rosemont College, and is easily accessible from Routes 76 and 476. The Gallery is dedicated to providing substantive exhibits for the broader community, while also providing a venue for group and solo shows of the students of Rosemont College. For more information, please call 610-527-0200, ext. 2967.

JOHN A. BENIGNO PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGES

<http://www.photographicimages.us>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/johnbenigno>

<http://www.mastersofphotography.blogspot.com/>

<http://www.facebook.com/John.A.Benigno.Photographic.Images>