

Alex Neumann didn't start off wanting to be a photographer. Not even close. He wanted to be a doctor.

"I spent three years at McGill with a vague idea of getting into medical research," said Neumann. "My mother wanted me to be a doctor."

But a studio course at McGill and a desire for feedback that he wasn't getting in the sciences lead Neumann to take up the camera and ultimately to his present exhibition at Latitude 53.

The Latitude exhibition, called Sites/Sights, is a series of photographic landscapes where Neumann uses the camera as a paintbrush.

"I still tend to see my color photos as paintings and my black and white shots as drawings," said Neumann. "The images I still see as something I do with my hand rather than with a mechanical device."

Neumann's vision of photography stems out of his training. Although Neumann has trained as a painter and a graphic artist, he has no formal training as a photographer. "I picked up all I know about photography off the street, reading manuals, and talking to other photographers."

Neumann did take the only studio course offered at McGill and then moved on to the School of Art and Design at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

"When I started off in McGill it was much more out of interest in finding out about my self and society than in simply acquiring any skill," said Neumann. "By doing this (studying art) I was able to get some feedback that was impossible in the sciences."

Neumann continued his studies at the

Montreal Museum for three years, "mainly as a painter."

Neumann like the Museum's atmosphere because "it was a nice small community where people work out their ideas rather than have a style imposed on them."

After graduation from the Museum Neumann joined Vehicule Art Inc., "an artist-run space in Montreal."

Vehicule exposed me to a lot of international avant-garde art work," said Neumann.

And since Neumann was also the only member of the co-operative who owned a camera. "I also got to document all the exhibits."

That taste of photography pushed Neumann into making a choice: "painting, or photography. I couldn't afford to do both."

Neumann's current work with landscapes is part of his self-imposed long-term program.

"I gave myself a program—one that would cover all the basic photographic genres," said Neumann.

Neumann started with portraits then moved on to still lifes and landscapes.

His portraits were not traditional photographic portraits but multiple exposures. "You can't take one portrait of a person," said Neumann. "You have to take numerous portraits."

Neumann settled on "double exposures done at random." The exposures could be seconds or hours apart.

With his still lifes, Neumann kept the camera still, and moved the objects he was photographing.

"But with my landscapes, what I do is pho-

tograph a site for one-fifth of a second while moving the camera," said Neumann. "One-fifth of a second is enough time to show detail, and make the site specific, while still showing motion."

Neumann determines a start position and an end position, and through rehearsals determines a complete movement. "I do a strange little dance."

"I'm working with coincidence," said Neumann. "It's a coincidence because I have a certain amount of control over my photos - I get an idea of what I'll get through the rehearsals-but for the details to work, I have to develop the photos to see what will happen."

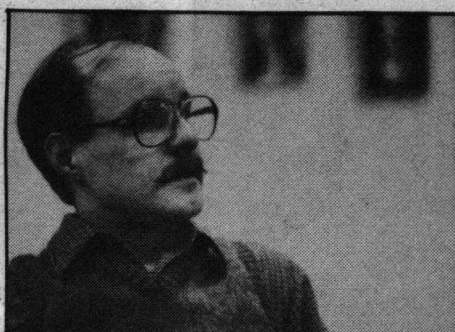
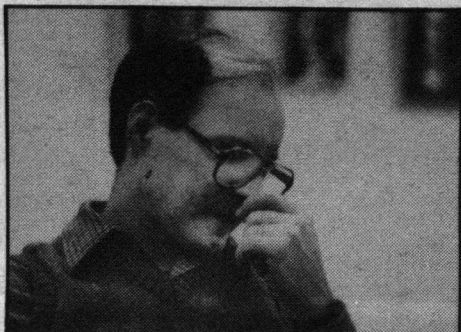
"The impetus of this series was the frustration born of my travel shots," said Neumann. "This way I experience the place twice: once when I'm there and once when I'm in the dark room."

"My two eyes are of unequal strength so on very rare occasions this is the way I actually see the world."

Neumann considers his work more futurism-inspired than cubist-inspired. "The futurists were much more interested with motion and time than in shapes."

Some of the places captured in Neumann's unique landscapes includes locations in France, Hungary and Arizona. "I photograph places that are pretty much accessible to everybody."

Ultimately Neumann sees his work as a manipulation of the environment. "The act of turning the camera and turning the key to the cruise missile are both attempts to manipulate the environment."



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