

# Les Allert

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## Artist Statement

Fascinated by the natural world around me for most of my life, I seek to bring that perspective to the viewers of my fine art photography. My early photographic experience centered on bringing natural scenes to park visitors in interpretive programs using 35mm slide photography. Failing to produce acceptable images of a solar eclipse in 1994, I realized that I had much to learn about how to take inspiring photographs. Since then I have taken numerous photo classes at two community colleges and several workshops in various aspects of photography.

I have found that black and white photography has the ability to express strong feelings about a subject and the enhanced detail produced by a large format camera further that interest. My fine art photographic subjects are always “found” objects or scenes such as on landscapes, modern and historic architectural, and most recently, abstract features found in these subjects. Inspired by Ansel Adams, Edward Weston and Brett Weston, I most often capture natural landscapes during my travels. Focusing on an upside down and backwards image on the ground glass of the large format camera allows me to see and capture scenes that include the elements of design: line, shape, texture and form. This camera takes time to set up and focus, thus slowing me down, forcing me to take the time to better analysis the subject, to compose the image for greater appeal. This camera also permits me to fully utilize the zone system, developed by Ansel Adams to control contrast in the negative through proper exposure and development of the film

For many years, I have been interested in an old photo printing technique, first patented in 1873, “Platinum Printing”. With the rise in the cost of platinum after the turn of the twentieth century, this technique was abandoned in favor of the less expensive silver printing process, in common use to this day. Beginning in the 1970’s, a few fine art photographers began exploring platinum printing because of its greater and richer tonal range and its archival life of perhaps a thousand years. After taking my first platinum printing workshop in Taos, NM in 1999, I was put off by the expense of the equipment and space required to explore this technique at home. Taking my second workshop in Placerville, CA in 2011 changed all that with the introduction to digital negatives. This represented a way of improving my negatives and enlarging them for making contact platinum prints in various sizes without losing the sharpness of the original image. While the process is still time consuming, the results are outstanding. The process has added more warmth and detail to my images, enhancing the visual perspectives for the viewers of my work.