

Headed for the blue side of town

By Sue Harrison

BANNER STAFF

When New York photographer George Hirose came to Provincetown he felt there was nothing left to shoot. Then the sun went down.

The resulting images are in a new photography book, "Blue Nights," published by Provincetown Arts. There will be a release and book signing at the Provincetown Art Association, 460 Commercial St., from 5 to 7 p.m. on Friday, July 11.

This weekend images from the book will be on display at Ernden Gallery, 397 Commercial St., Provincetown, with a reception from 7 to 9 p.m. Friday, June 27. The Ernden show hangs through July 10.

"I had done a little night photography, not any series, just random shots with film, the old-fashioned way," he says. "When I first came to town I was shooting during the day but it seemed that so many, like Joel Meyerowitz, had already done such a good job that I felt I had nothing new to offer."

Then, he says, while looking at one of Meyerowitz's books he

noticed that there were a couple of twilight shots and those piqued his interest.

"Cape light and the visual clarity had already been done so well," he says. "I'm a night person, that's why I live in New York. There are people on the street at 3 or 4 a.m. and I often meet my friends after midnight. When I work then I feel like I kind of own the night and can work undistractedly."

He says he loves the way Provincetown looks at night. "Everything is stripped away and left with a mysterious quality. I always look for light with different temperatures, especially the blues," he says. "I found I could be really abstract with night shots when color falls away and it becomes monochromatic."

Then, in the printing process, he gets to take the light qualities he has captured and push them even further.

"I am looking for a vividness one doesn't experience at night," he says. "I like things that are iconic and try to cover the key points of town."

He asked people like Norman Mailer to list places they thought he should shoot at night, and



"Full Moon and Window," by George Hirose.

when they started to talk about it they really connected.

"He asked if the night was blue to me and when I said yes, he said, that's the title for your book, "Blue Nights."

"Blue is a key emotional color for me," Hirose says. "Think of the blues, it's very sensual, mysterious, and there is a sadness. There is something transporting about twilight blue. When I'm in New York sometimes I go down to the river and just



"The Burger Queen," by George Hirose.

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"Asleep at the Wheel," by George Hirose.

watch the color shift into blue."

Night shots, he says, can take the viewer out of the current moment and capture a timeless sense of place. And though the sun is gone there are other light sources. The moon offers a cool expanse of light, halogens at the boatyard bathe the monolithic boat cradles in green, cars drive by leaving trails of red or come toward the camera's viewpoint, making an eerie flash effect.

Shooting at night is often a waiting game.

"There are so many decisive moments. Sometimes I can shoot repeatedly and others I'm there a long time waiting for things to happen. Sometimes I can predict what will happen."

He goes back to the spiritual

theme and says when he walks around at night and sees houses with lights in their windows he feels the element of humanity, even though no people are visible. Sometimes he stands and tries to imagine what the person who lives behind the glowing curtains is like.

And like so many artists before him, he feels the New York-Provincetown connection.

"Provincetown is perfect for a New Yorker," he says. "It has the liveliness of the New York culture and is full of people who refuse to play by the rules."

In a town that prides itself on its light, come see what one photographer can do with the night.

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