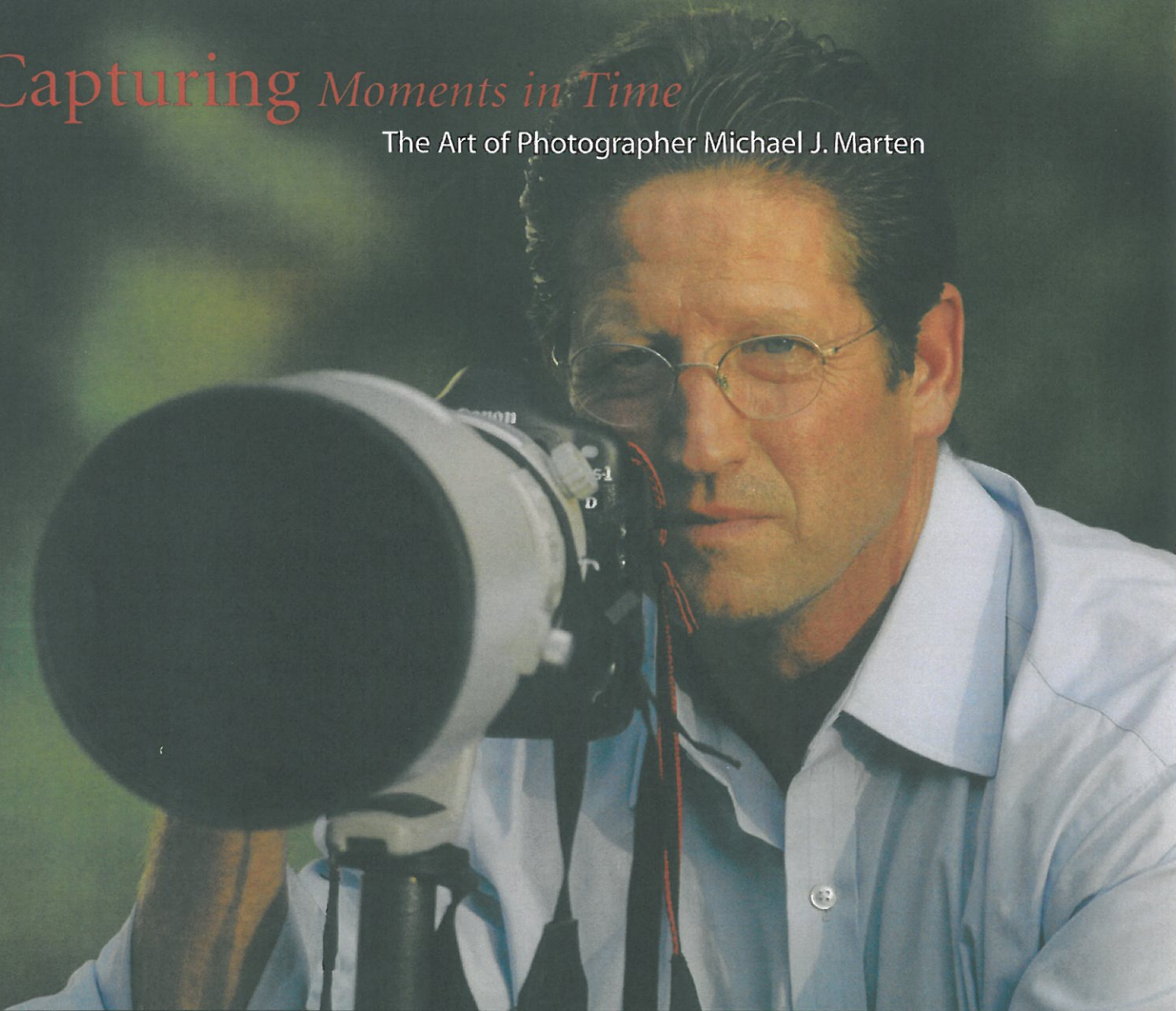


Capturing Moments in Time

The Art of Photographer Michael J. Marten



Ask Michael Marten what makes a good photograph, and he will talk about balance, light, feeling – and all of the technical aspects that would just as easily describe a good painting. Marten has spent years following a passion for his art, and the result is evident not only in his mastery of technique, but also in his unique ability to capture the very soul of his subjects.

In describing his shots of this year's Travers Stakes, he said, "I shot the race from the only place on that track that I knew would have the right light. It has taken me 20 years, but I'm starting to *get it*." But what really sets Marten apart is his ability to capture the personality of the horse. "I don't really care that the horse isn't really standing right," he said. "Anybody could actually stand the horse right, I'm looking for the personality." Describing a recent shot of Giant's

Causeway, he said, "I had him kind of walking towards me, he turned his head, he got this little look in his eye, and he's chewing on a piece of grass – and I guarantee you that that's *him*."

A nationally syndicated photographer and a two-time recipient of the Eclipse Award for Photography, Marten photographs the beauty of the racing world from Del Mar to Saratoga, from Europe to Dubai. Born in Sao Paulo, Brazil and raised in Queens, NY, Marten earned a B.F.A. in Photography from St. John's University in Jamaica, NY. He now resides in Del Mar.

He ended up photographing racehorses rather by accident. As Marten recalled, "I thought I was going to be a professional athlete, but I injured myself when I went to St. John's to play ball, so I had to kind of regroup. I had to figure out



Matriarch Fillies

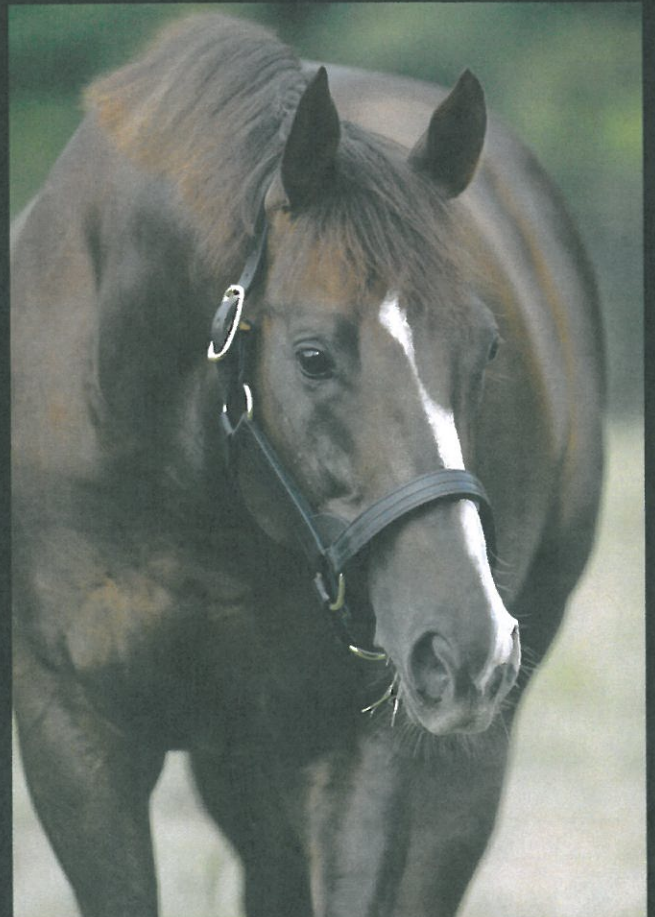
what to major in, and they had photography. I said ‘Oh, this looks easy!’ That’s really how it happened, I really just kind of fell into it.”

On the other hand, it was a very natural progression. Marten was an exceptional athlete in high school, and had even been scouted for baseball and football. He had the same “God given speed” that he now recognizes in Thoroughbreds. “That’s the gift,” he said. “There’s nothing like a really drop-dead, hard core, action photo of a Thoroughbred.”

While in college, he began photographing professional football, baseball and hockey. “I used to sneak into the arenas – literally pull up a chair at the New York Rangers hockey games and just shoot the games.”

“Then at St. John’s I was working for the Sports Information Department, and one day I just walked into an office trying to sell some college basketball photos. This guy had just bought the rights to the New York Mets newspaper called *Inside Pitch*, and he said, ‘You want to shoot for the New York Mets?’ Well, I shot almost all of their home games that year!”

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Giant’s Causeway



Alex Solis

Following a stint in Los Angeles in 1984 to photograph the Olympics, Marten returned to New York and went to work shooting college and professional football for *Sports Eye*. “I was living in Rosedale,” he recalled, “and Belmont was five minutes one direction and Aqueduct was five minutes the other direction. *Sports Eye* started a publication called *Racing Action*. So I got a credential to shoot the Belmont Stakes.” And that was how he fell into photographing horses.

Marten also worked for the *Racing Times* and the *Post Parade* before landing a job freelancing for the *Racing Form*. That was in 1992 – or as Marten measures time “the year that A.P. Indy won the Breeders’ Cup Classic at Gulfstream.”

Eventually he hooked up with Harold Roth, the founder of *Horsephotos* – a photographic stock library and assignment

agency that specializes in horse racing. Marten brought the *Racing Form* as a client, and soon he and Roth were partners. As Marten put it, “Harold’s the business brains, I’m the creative side, and our third partner, Jim Tyrell, is the computer side.”

Marten now spends much of his time training young photographers. One of the techniques he passes on is using remote cameras – a specialty he has developed over the years. He sets up cameras to photograph a race from various angles depending on whether the horses run, say, on the rail or in the middle of the track, then hard wires them to fire when a button is pressed. It involves hours of work setting up and running wire. “You’ve to have the equipment and the patience, and you have to put the time in,” Marten said. “And



Perfect Drift

Recently he caught a rare morning shot at Del Mar. "I came out of the house at 6:00, and there was the sun," he said. "I went to the first turn – I wanted to go where the sun would be right – and I got Perfect Drift coming by first time around with the pony. Look at that," he said, pointing to the photograph, "in the sun, with Murray Johnson up. That just says Del Mar!"

sometimes you have to get lucky."

Marten is well known for his morning shots. "One of the reasons why I love to go to Saratoga is the light there," he said. "I always say that when God created Saratoga he must have been a photographer as a hobby, because he just put it in the perfect spot, where the sun is gorgeous late in the afternoons; and in the mornings you get the fog and the mist and the sunrise with the horses."

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A special collection of Marten's work, "Digital on Canvas," recently showed in Del Mar and Saratoga. It comprised more than 50 of his works reproduced on canvas in sizes ranging from 11 by 17 inches to 28 by 40 inches. To view a collection of over 7,000 of his images online, visit www.horsephotos.com.



Behrens winning the Pegasus at Meadowlands