## **Artist Statement**

Our national park system was created to set aside areas of important and unique quality for future generations to enjoy. As an artist, I am devoted to contributing to that legacy by photographing primarily in public lands, particularly national parks.

When photographing in the parks, it is all too easy to emphasize certain iconic figures, such as Delicate Arch or Half Dome. As an artist, I photograph those features, but try to do so in a unique way. I put most of my efforts, though, into capturing all aspects of the park, from the small meadow flowers to the grand vistas and mega fauna. So few visitors actually leave the road system to explore and enjoy all of the unique features of that land that has been set aside for their benefit. This has become increasingly true in recent years, as overall visitation to our parks is down and visitors are more likely to choose quick day-trips than overnight stays. This adds extra importance to my desire to photograph away from the roads.

My hopes as an artist-in-residence for Badlands National Park will be to explore and photograph as much as possible away from the road system. I would also place a lot of emphasis on the backcountry of the park, particularly the Wilderness Area in the North Unit and the Stronghold Unit area to the southwest of Sheep Mountain Table. My goal would be to document and express the beauty in areas of the park that so many never have the opportunity to see, and in a way not found in the traditional landscape photography approach to the park. This would give me the best chance to capture images that express the diversity of the park, whether in one image or a series of images in a photo journal. It is also why I have chosen to pursue a residency in the spring, as the presence of blooming flora would provide a nice contrast to the seemingly desolate land that earned such an ominous name.

For the classroom presentations, as well as programs I would offer to visitors at the park, my goal would be to empower the program attendees to create their own art. As the digital age continues to grow, people think they need the latest and greatest technology to capture good images. This tends to create a self-fulfilling prophecy that a person cannot take good photos if they have an "old" camera. My objective would be to share the joy and passion of creating, and how great images are born from that joy more so than what camera you use. I would emphasize basic photo skills that work for any camera, getting out in the field and practicing, self-teaching, and learning to see the world through a photographer's eye.

Ever increasingly, being a photographic artist is a multi-media process. Photographers blog, create narrative slide shows for web publication, present multi-media lectures involving complicated transitions and music. As such, I would blog my daily experiences, when possible, and reflect on my creative process during the residency. During my residency with Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve, I could not work in real time on publishing and sharing these types of works because of the remoteness of the park and lack of technology. With a residency in Badlands National Park, I could have the remote, backcountry experience combined with access to facilities at park

headquarters. This would be a tremendous opportunity to both have an intensive focus on a body of work while being able to simultaneously create multi-media output for display on the Web.

Thus, my greatest opportunity for growth as an artist would be to explore this merging of technology and wilderness that is so increasingly a part of the photographer's process. In *The Singing Wilderness*, Sigurd Olson wrote about the problems associated with taking too many gadgets into the wild places with us, that, "When in the wilds, we must not carry our problems with us or the joy is lost." One of the ever-increasing challenges for the modern photographer is to harmonize the wild experience with the opportunities that those gadgets can create. As an artist, it is something I need to further explore for my own creative process. I know that an artist-in-residence position at Badlands National Park would be a perfect opportunity to continue to explore harmonizing photographic technology with wildness.

To view more of Carl's work please visit: http://www.carljohnsonphoto.com/