

Barry Seidman

Photography brings things to life for former advertising executive

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It started in a New York City advertising agency more than 40 years ago, where Barry Seidman worked in the mail room while going to night school.

"My boss told me to go out and take some pictures in the shade and see what happens," said Seidman, of Palm Beach Gardens.

And what happened was a successful career in commercial photography, which has supported him and his wife and allowed him to work on his passion — fine art photography.

His exhibit, *Bagged*, is now on display at the Palm Beach Photographic Centre in Delray Beach. The exhibition, which is his first Florida show, is the series of rare dye transfer prints and was originally shown at his first show in New York City in 1982.

Brown paper bags are the motif for the photos, which were shot using an 8-by-10-inch view camera that produced a negative of the same size.

"There was no room for error on these slides, and this was before Photo Shop — you couldn't erase a fingerprint made on these slides," he said of the negatives that would then be sent to a lab where they would be meticulously dipped in dye and transferred to paper — now a lost art. "When it was finished, there was nothing like it.

"The nuances of light and color were amazing."

Before that day at the agency, Seidman had really only used Kodak Brownie cameras as a child.

"I had to teach myself how to use the speed graphic camera," he said of the big, chunky cameras typically used by the press in the early to mid 1900s. "I'm self-taught; never had a lesson on how-to."

It wasn't his lifelong dream to go into advertising. It was just an idea he had one day when he was dressed up in a jacket and tie for his high school yearbook picture.

"All the kids had something next to their name like varsity team or math club and I had



CYDNEY SCOTT/Staff Photographer

Barry Seidman, in his studio at his home, has his photo exhibit 'Bagged' showing at the Palm Beach Photographic Centre in Delray Beach. His latest

work, 'Bloomers,' will be shown at Palm Beach Gardens City Hall in April. A commercial photographer by trade, fine arts photography is his passion.

nothing, so I said I planned to go into advertising," he said. "I don't know why I said it, but I did."

When he started working in the mail room, he also was attending Pratt Institute, an arts college in Brooklyn. Eventually, Seidman became art director of photography at the agency — a title they invented for him, he said.

And at work is where Seidman met his wife of almost 40 years, Mary Ann Kurasz, a television producer for commercials and his long-time business partner.

After eight years, Seidman broke out on his own.

"I got to be pretty good at it,"

he said. "I was able to establish myself and agencies would come to me.

"I got to be known for my still lifes."

He did advertising print media photography for national brands including, Cruzan, Nikon, American Express, Nabisco, Procter and Gamble, AT&T and Coca Cola.

Three years ago, the couple decided they had worked hard enough and wanted a different lifestyle, Seidman said. So, they headed to South Florida, where Seidman finally gets to drive around in his dream car, a Corvette convertible, and dresses

casually for work.

Although, most of his work comes to him by Federal Express, when his clients mail him their products to shoot in his home studio, he still goes to places such as New York City, Los Angeles and Chicago to work.

"Whenever I come back home, I feel like I'm coming back to a vacation," said Seidman, who also has shot countless celebrities. He recently returned from shooting a commercial with Jennifer Garner. "I do commercial work because it's what puts food on the table for now."

But his first love is express-

ing himself through fine art photography. His most recent show, "Bloomers," which was inspired by flowers for sale at a local market, will be exhibited at Palm Beach Gardens City Hall in April. Some of the pieces in the show are 8-feet long.

"Some are very large — that's the way I see them — big," said Seidman, whose intention was to try to make his audience see what he sees when he looks at these flowers. "This is self-expression and I'm so happy I have the artistic ability to do it."

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