



# Photographer Antonia Cunningham Brings Life Into Vivid Detail

*With a macrolens, a fast shutter, and an eye for brilliant color, Cunningham captures a moment and reveals joy in profound simplicity.*

The vibrant blues, blazing reds, and intense greens drench you in color. Detail is so vivid droplets kissing the petals of a flower refresh like a morning mist. Photographs by Antonia Cunningham are stunning glimpses into moving beyond habitual perspectives. They invite taking a closer look at the mundane and in so doing, being changed.

With an appreciation of the joy in spontaneous interaction of simple things, Cunningham infuses a sense of wonder into her photos, elevating a glass of water, an ice cube, a bag of trash into splendid works of art.

"Some of my best work comes when I don't expect it. I go outside and shoot. Within that is the discovery," Cunningham said. "It's just what I see."

A Bloomington native, Cunningham holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in Photography from Millikin University and works as a portrait photographer. But her passion is for abstract photography, she said, using a macrolens and working in concert with natural lighting. She shoots 35 millimeter slides presented on Cibachrome prints, a process she said is known for rich colors.

"A lot of my work is abstract because there's a simple beauty in it," she said. "I'm crazy about sunlight. There's nothing that can compare to natural lighting. Studio lighting is good, but natural lighting wraps around things. It's so pure."

Cunningham's photos carry the grounding of her art history studies in Italy and influences of growing up near Lake Bloomington. Water is a consistent element in her photographs, lending fluid lines, a sense of motion, and the feeling of capturing a moment.

"Living out there at the lake is peaceful, it's a part of me," she said. "There's a transparency to water, and it can obscure things."

The abstractness of Cunningham's photographs speaks to individual interpretation. Her technique asks you to rethink your judgments. The photographs in her Mood Specific series startle pre-

conceptions of color as the subject, a glass mask, transforms from hauntingly icy to deep blue serenity. Liquid reds, yellows, and pinks drizzle deliciously in Clocked Out, one of her Abstract 1 series, turning a common plastic drinking glass into a sensual encounter. The light dancing off the surface of water in a hot tub and the unfolding effervescence of bubbles in Cunningham's Cerulean series coaxes you to immerse yourself in the moment, to let your senses expand to all that it holds.

It is this immediacy that is Cunningham's signature look, and one that is drawing attention as she emerges as an artist, said Doug Johnson, director of the McLean County Arts Center.

"I think AJ's photographs are exciting, even for people who aren't initiated with the complexity of photographic art making,"

he said. "She has great use of color, vivid images, and a real affection for abstract. Away from the objects being presented, there is a strong presentation and visual interest that speaks to ways of art-making that aren't dependent on real objects."

Cunningham's photographic work has been featured in various art shows and on a wine label at A. Renee, a local winery with a fine wine, cuisine, and art shop in downtown Bloomington. But what excites her is to hear of people picking up from her photographs an enthusiasm for what is already right in front of them. It's fitting that she works with a macrolens, putting the commonplace under a microscope and revealing its profound simplicity.

See Cunningham's photographs at the McLean County Arts Center, Specs Around Town, Top Priorities Day Spa, and on her website at [www.ajcunningham.com](http://www.ajcunningham.com). ■

