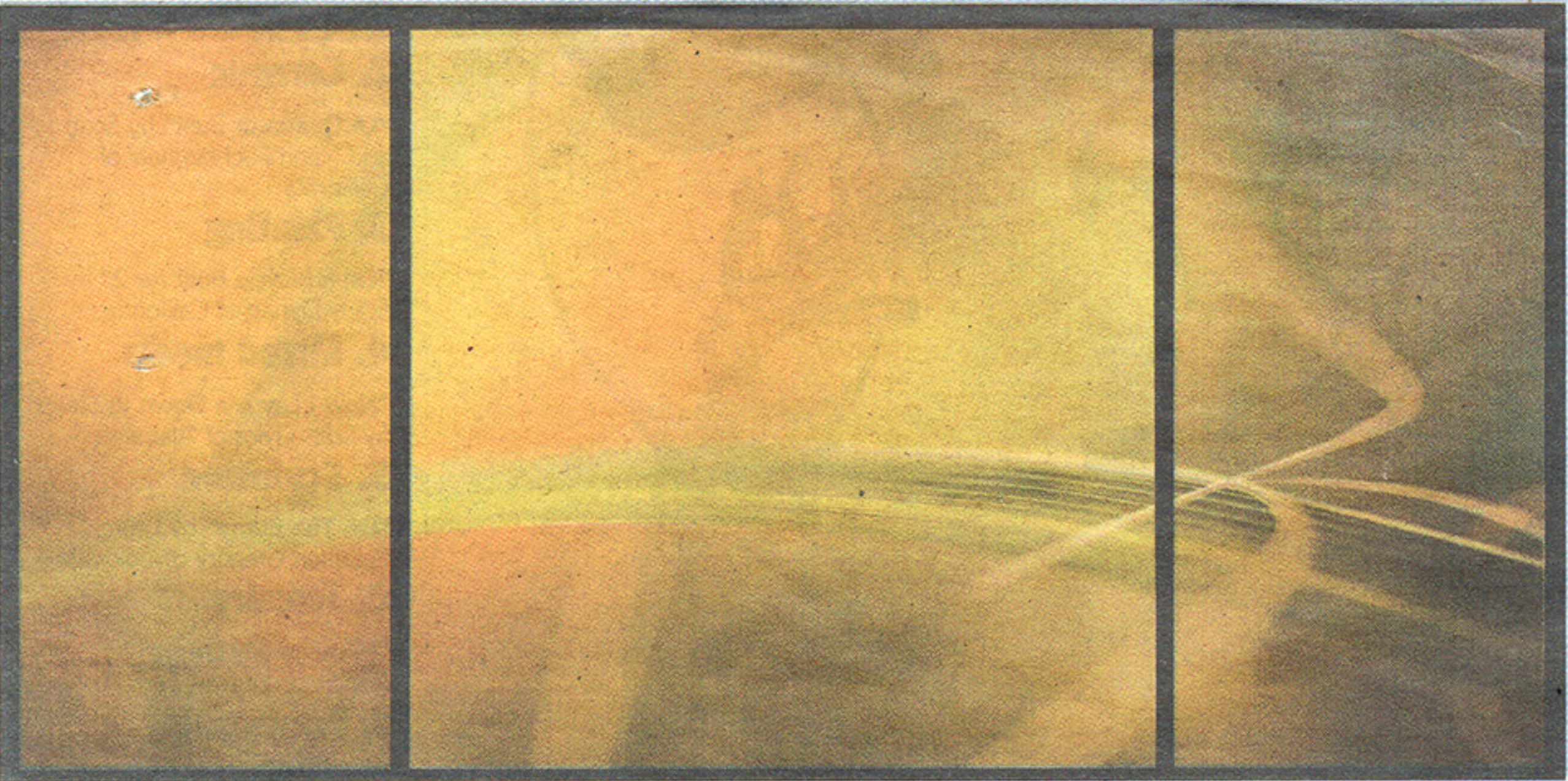


MEET THE ARTISTS



Mark Stephenson: Passion in his photographs

BY SONYA ENGLISH

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Photographer Mark Stephenson is the archetype of an artist: His studio sits on 6 acres of Sky Valley desert. He has a degree in poetry and uses for inspiration “the transcendental magic of being alive.”

He channels that passion for life into his artwork, performing all of the creative and technical processes involved. He even frames the finished art in floater frames that he makes.

The materials and methods he uses produce an extremely durable image, he said.

“Images will not fade or shift in color noticeable to the human eye for over 100 years under normal indoor lighting conditions,” he wrote in an artist statement.

When he sets out to create a photograph, Stephenson said he goes out into nature, mostly the desert southwest, opens his aperture and “just shoots.” He doesn’t try to conquer his surroundings, he said, but surrender to them.

“It’s a robust, with-every-speck-of-energy-in-my-being surrendering,” Stephenson said.

He plays with techniques to engage and surprise viewers, he said.

He’s grown accustomed to people touching the pieces in his “Weeds” collection — one of four he’ll bring to the La Quinta Arts Festival — to feel that it’s not three-dimensional.

He places large photographs of a tumbleweed onto a black background. The high contrast and fine detail creates the illusion that the object is floating.

“This plays off the physiology of the way we respond to very high contrast and detail,” Stephenson said.

This is his seventh year at the La Quinta festival. He said most of the work he’ll show is new.