

"Bagged"

PREMIERES IN FLORIDA

By Skip Sheffield

Palm Beach Photographic Centre, 55 N.E. Second Ave., Delray Beach, presents the Florida premiere of Barry Seidman's historic "Bagged" exhibit of still-life fruit and vegetable large-scale photographs.

The exhibit may be seen through April 26.

"Bagged" has been seen only once before, at its world premiere in September, 1982, at Nickrug Photographica in New York City.

Barry Seidman is one of New

York's top commercial photographers. "Bagged" was created to express his more purely artistic as opposed to commercial side.

Seidman spent as much as an entire day creating each of the 20 images he chose as the best of the best for his first gallery show. They were shot with an old-fashioned Sinar 8-by-10 view camera on Kodak transparencies with art studio lighting, then the prints were made by the expensive, time-consuming but exquisite dye transfer process on the highest quality paper.

Still color photographs like those in "Bagged" will never be created again. Kodak discontinued the materials for dye transfers in 1994. Hardly anyone shoots on film anymore, and certainly not on large-scale 8-by-10 color transparencies.

Seidman went totally digital three years ago after he had the tag sale of a lifetime at his New York studios and moved with his wife Mary Ann to Palm Beach Gardens, Florida. He maintains a studio and frequently travels to New York.

"I would have gone out of business without digital technology", Seidman admits. "I can create and manipulate images in my studio in Florida and send them anywhere in the world, instantly. Bagged is my tribute to a lost art and a lost era. I don't live in the past. My favorite image is what I am working on right now. However, this exhibit and my next one, 'Bloomers,' are like my children."

The "children" of "Bagged" were created with loving memories of Seidman's mother, who like most moms of the 1950s, did all the grocery shopping and brought home the food in large brown paper bags. The empty bags were folded into the space between the wall and the refrigerator and later recycled as garbage bags.

"There is a certain beauty to those old paper bags," he says. "They can be lit differently to change their look completely. I am a control freak when it comes to lighting. In the days before computers and Photoshop, you had to get it perfect, no manipulation, auto-focus. Advertisers demanded the very best and were willing to pay for it. Those dye transfer prints cost anywhere from \$500 to \$700 each."

Educated at Pratt Institute, where he studied graphic illustration and design, Seidman entered the advertising business via the mailroom of William Esty, then the ninth largest advertising



agency in the world. He soon rose to art director and then art director of photography.

With his wife, television producer Mary Ann Kurasz, www.BarrySeidman.com has as clients the major companies of the world, from American Express and AT&T to Burger King, Coca-Cola and Schweppes. Seidman maintains a scrapbook of photos taken with major celebrities and he has a mantle full and wall full of advertising award trophies, including Addys, Clios, Tellys, Art Directors Club and American Institute of Graphic Arts.

"We've lived in Florida three

years, and we love it, but this is the first time I have mounted a show here," he says. "I was at FOTOfusion a couple years ago, and who did I see but Marge Niekrug, the woman who urged me to do a show. She asked what had happened to 'Bagged,' and I told her it was in storage, along with many other things. Fatima NeJame (Photographic Centre director) expressed an interest. Her board members saw the work, and here we are." ■

Palm Beach Photographic Centre is open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday-Saturday. Call 276-9797 or visit www.fotofusion.org.