

# THE NEW YORKER

PHOTO BOOTH

## THE PROJECTIONIST'S SECRET WORLD

By Elisabeth Biondi February 9, 2011

Gordon Brinckle was the projectionist for a local movie theatre in small-town Delaware, and the photographer Kendall Messick grew up across the street from him. On a visit to Brinckle's home, Messick discovered that Brinckle, inspired by his love for the movie palaces of the early twentieth century, had build an elaborate replica in the basement of his home over the course of forty years. He named it Shalimar. Messick immediately recognized that its creator was more than merely eccentric—he was an artist. He photographed Brinckle's world for six years before the projectionist died, in 2007.

Messick took bold color photographs of Brinckle's downstairs movie paradise, and documentary black-and-white pictures of his upstairs retirement life. These, together with the works on paper that Brinckle created over the course of his long life, are gathered in Messick's magical new book and film, both called "The Projectionist." But Messick's devotion to his discovery was not limited to these works: he also saved the Shalimar theatre. With Gordon's permission, he removed it piece by piece from the basement, reconstructed it, and created a travelling exhibition.

On Sunday the 13th, at the American Folk Art Museum, Messick will speak about the Projectionist project as part of the symposium "Uncommon Artists XIX." A special screening of the documentary, followed by a Q. & A., is scheduled for 1 P.M. Here's a selection from Messick's tribute to an amazing autodidact.



Image: Shalimar Exit © Kendall Messick