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Fotoseptiembre

By **Betty Taylor**
 Contributor

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Fotoseptiembre USA-SAFOTO, one of the largest photography festival worldwide gets under way next month and will feature the works of two area artists.

The festival, now in its 12th year, will include New Braunfels resident John Moler's exhibit "Landscapes — Autodocuments" and Wimberley resident Roger Colombik's "Across the Divide — Children in Romania and the Republic of Georgia." About 13 of Moler's photos will go on display beginning Aug. 21 and continuing through Oct. 7 at the New Braunfels Public Library. Colombik's work can be seen on a Web gallery as part of the festival at safotofestival.com

"We seek out artists whose work is eclectic and fresh, showing a commitment to craft and vision," said Michael Mehl, festival director.

Artists from Uruguay, Switzerland, Japan, England, France, Germany, Spain, Argentina, Brazil and other countries have participated in the festival. Moler has exhibited in the festival several times. But his work this year is different than past series and exhibits.

"I work mostly in landscapes and still lifes ... a little bit of architecture," he said.

And he has worked with typologies — a set of things done with a process. The series usually involves at least nine in a set and the same camera angle and process are used for each item in the set.

"For instance, I did a series of churches," he said.

The church project featured small or hidden-away churches in the South Dakota area. All were shot using the same type of camera process and edited onto a white background.

Moler did the same thing with a series of small creeks in the area. His series of wet weather creeks is almost like a geographical study, he said.

"Landscapes—Autodocuments" is different, Moler said. The series does not involve a set process.

"These are done from the heart, and then the brain finishes them off," he said.

Moler explained that this type of photography occurs when something or a set of things grabs a photographer's eye and instantly creates a "mood" when it is shot.

"It is more personal," he said. "It is showing my hand."

"Landscapes" was shot at an "eco-niche" no bigger than half of a football field in size, but Moler declined to say where. It was shot on black and white film and shot when he was in a dark mood, he said. One of the biggest challenges in the series was going back and keeping

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that "mood" for all the shots.

"I wanted to keep a stylistic conformity," he said.

An opening reception for Moler's exhibit will take place from 2 to 4:30 p.m. Sept. 9 at the New Braunfels Public Library.

Roger Colombik, an art professor who teaches sculpting at Texas State University in San Marcos, said this was his first time to participate in Fotoseptiembre.

"For the past 14 years, I've been documenting the transitions in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus and the effects of social, economic and cultural changes in post-Soviet Union," he said. "I'm most interested in how all these new policies are affecting the children."

Colombik's Web gallery exhibit will be on display through January.

"This is a work in progress. It is an ongoing project," Colombik said. "One of the crises there now are the issues of emigration and what happens to cultural heritage. Parents are emigrating to Spain and the U.S. The difficulty now is keeping the cultural heritage that goes back hundreds of years and trying to address who shall remain."

Colombik said he tried to capture what was most beautiful and what was most tragic in his photos.

He said that while societies in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus are undergoing changes, children still sing and dance traditional folk songs.

"Since 1993, I've had at least eight intensive journeys to the Caucasus and Eastern Europe," he said. "I found the most suitable means of documenting these experiences were through photography, essays and poetry."

Exhibit information

Some of the other exhibits that are part of Fotoseptiembre 2007 include the

following:

- "Allen Ginsberg: Beat Generation Photographer" showing through Oct. 14 at the San Antonio Museum of Art
- "Texas Zydeco" by James Fraher of Chicago on display Sept. 8 through January at the Witte Museum
- "Other People's Pictures" by Beto Gonzalez of San Antonio on display Sept. 14 through Oct. 13 at Galeria Ortíz Contemporary (4026 McCollough).

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