

The Other SAVANNAH

Photographer Kirt Witte reveals the city's hidden beauty

By Jennifer R. Weis

Millions of tourists visit Savannah each year, but most see only a tiny fraction of what the city has to offer. In his photography project, "The Other Savannah," Kirt Witte hopes to change that.

"'The Other Savannah' aims to show that Savannah is so much more than the Historic District, and so much more than what people perceive in John Berendt's *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*," Witte says. "When you live here, you get to experience a whole collection of the little details. It is not any one building or fountain, it's the iron fence on the corner, it's the woodwork around the window, and, of course, it's the people that make Savannah truly unique."

Witte discovered this for himself when he moved to the city two years ago. Born in Beaconsfield, England, Witte grew up in Dallas, Texas. After graduating with a Bachelor of Science in photography from Sam Houston State Uni-

versity, he spent six months working as a photographer for Carnival Cruise Lines, then the next 10 years working as a 3D animator and graphic artist, including developing graphics for Sony Playstation2's "Spy Hunter" videogame, and designing computer animation for such major clients as Coca-Cola, Pepsi and Lockheed-Martin.

Working 70 hours a week, with a wife and small child at home, Witte soon realized that, "At a certain point in life, you have to stop and smell the roses." Four months later, he accepted a job as Professor of Computer Art at the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD).

"For the first six months, we just walked around going, 'Wow, that would be a good picture.' The trees, the beaches, the history ... there are a million stories to tell," Witte says.

The city sparked a reaction in Witte, and he started taking photographs. Lots of them. Then he started a Web site, putting the photos online. Today, thanks to the encourage-

"HIDDEN GARDEN" A STRATEGICALLY PLACED MIRROR REFLECTS COURTYARD (LEFT). "SAVANNAH IRON LAMP" (BELOW) IS THE ONLY ONE LIKE IT IN SAVANNAH. THE SAME HOUSE HAS THE ONLY ALL-IRON STAIRCASE IN THE CITY, WHICH HAS A HISTORY OF OLD IRON WORKS.





ment of one of his professors (Witte is enrolled in SCAD's MFA program), Witte has just finished two gallery shows and is in the process of putting together a book of his photographs, "The Other Savannah," which he hopes to have published this fall.


"It took me 10 years to figure out that I'm a better photographer than I am a computer artist," Witte says. "But all the technical skills have made me a better photographer."

"I shoot differently than most people," he continues. "I want to do it right. It's a passion of the heart."

Some of his non-traditional photographic methods include 360-degree panoramas, extreme close-ups, unexpected angles, the use of infrared film, and time exposures that present Savannah in a fresh light. In a favorite photo of the Tybee Lighthouse (opposite page), Witte incorporates the structure's shadow.

And although his Web site now features about 300 photos, Witte says he's not even close to hanging up his lenses. "There are still plenty of places I haven't gotten to yet," he says. He wants to get some marsh photos and some reflections, and just recently he went flying with the U.S. Coast Guard to capture some aerial photography. He's also working on a new section called "Day Trips," which will feature nearby Charleston and Cumberland Island.

"My goal is to show visitors and Savannahians alike what they may have been missing or what they do not realize is right in front of them."

Until the book is in front of you, you can view (and buy) Witte's imaginative photos online at <http://theothersavannah.com>. 



"TYBEE LIGHTHOUSE SHADOW" — DOWNWARD VIEW FROM THE TYBEE ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE AND MUSEUM (LEFT) IS ONE MOST PEOPLE DON'T SEE. "CARIBBEAN WINDOW" — A HISTORIC HOUSE WAS RESTORED WITH A BRIGHT NEW COLOR SCHEME (ABOVE LEFT). "SAVANNAH DODGE" — THIS OLD DODGE (ABOVE RIGHT) CATCHES EYES ON OGLETHORPE AVENUE. "SAVANNAH PORCH" — YOU HAVE TO LOOK UP WHEN YOU'RE IN SAVANNAH (BELOW) OR YOU WILL BE MISSING A LOT.

