PHOTOGRAPH: J. SAVAGE GIBSON

left: Moving to Savannah and exploring such visual treasures as this abandoned railroad roundhouse led Kirt Witte (pronounced like "witty") to rediscover his interest in photography. **below:** "It's amazing what you see in this town just by looking up," Kirt says. This shot shows a detailed corner of the 1923 Masonic Lodge.

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF KIRT WITTE

Clicking Away In Savannah

When he's not teaching computer arts, this professor revels in photographing his adopted hometown.

Kirt Witte crouches among the ruins of an abandoned railroad roundhouse, focusing his camera on a crumbling brick wall overtaken by vines. "This kind of place fascinates me," he says, pointing out rusty rails, a cathedral-like platform area, and the stoic grid of a long-unmoved cowcatcher. "Yet most people in Savannah don't even know it exists."

He gets that same giddy sense of discovery when he ventures beneath a busy bridge during rush hour on a foggy morning and spies long-legged birds wading among marsh grass. And when he looks up at the intricate bas-relief figures at the top of a stately old building. And when he visits a barber with a colorful personality who once held the world record for the tallest hairdo.

Although he works in computer animation—as a professor of three-dimensional visual effects at the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD)—Kirt is obsessed with capturing the city in pictures. His on-going project, dubbed *The Other Savannah,* documents his wide-eyed forays in his beloved town.

Too Busy To Notice

"Millions of people visit this city every year," Kirt says, "and yet there's so much they never really see. Even a lot of us who live here sometimes miss out on the details. Everyone's in such a hurry all the time, too busy to appreciate all the cool architecture, the great nature, and the interesting people that surround us."

His solution: Pick up a camera that had spent a decade stored away in a closet, and go hunting for new twists on this always-photogenic area.

A Texan with a degree in photography, Kirt detoured into a career in computer graphics. Working for various companies around Dallas, he designed increasingly complex animation programs for video games, soft drink commercials, car and airplane manufacturers, and more. When he came to Savannah to teach computer arts at SCAD, his direction in life took another unexpected turn.

"Savannah is such a visual place," he gushes. "When my wife, Heather, and I first came here, we walked everywhere saying 'wow' a lot at all the incredible things we saw. I hadn't taken pictures for about 10 years, but I dug out my camera and started shooting again just as a hobby." ▶
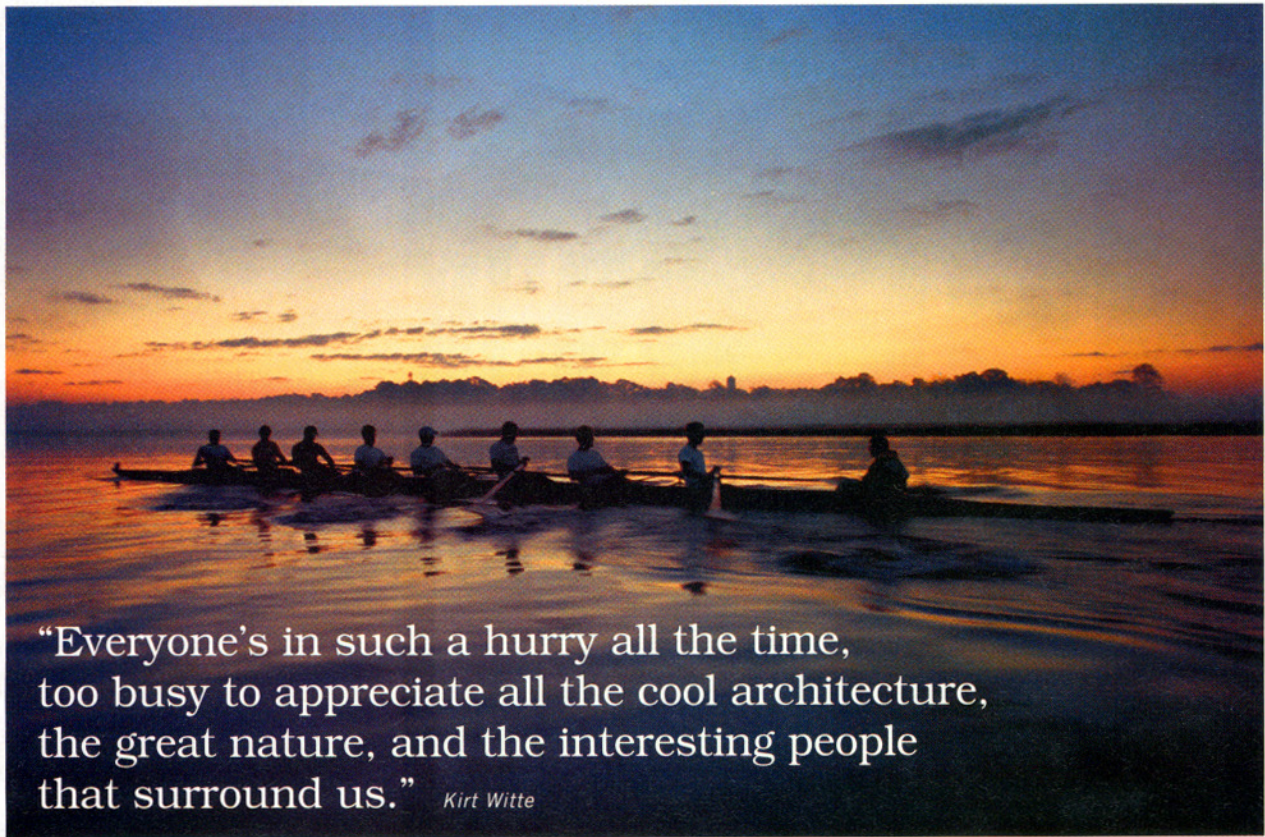
"Everyone's in such a hurry all the time, too busy to appreciate all the cool architecture, the great nature, and the interesting people that surround us." *Kirt Witte*

above: Kirt happened upon a Savannah College of Art and Design rowing crew during an early-morning photo safari along the Wilmington River. **far left:** Kirt's regular job involves banks of specialized computers, but for photography, he relies on his trusty old camera. **left:** The playful spirit of this historic house restoration with its bright Caribbean colors attracted Kirt's attention.

An "Other" Look

That hobby quickly evolved into *The Other Savannah,* his frequently updated Web site, occasional gallery exhibition, and pending book release, each designed to showcase his best efforts. "My goal is to reveal to visitors and Savannahians alike what they might be missing, what they might not realize is right in front of them," Kirt says. "I like to think I go beyond the postcard versions you can find at any gift shop and explore more subtle touches that make this such a special place."

He tags along with a pilot friend to capture aerial views of marshland veined by tidal creeks. He paddles a kayak to reach little-visited shorelines. He watches for juxtapositions of flowers blooming on iron fences and skillfully crafted woodwork around a historic-district window.

"After years of doing computer graphics, which I still enjoy, I realized how much photography means to me too," Kirt says of his rekindled passion. "I still use my old single-lens-reflex camera, but I've added a digital camera. With digital, comput-ers and photography have gotten closer to each other, allowing for a lot more alternative methods and non-traditional techniques, which is the kind of thing SCAD is all about.

"Savannah is like no other city in the world," he adds. "Most places tend to change and evolve with the people who come there, but with Savannah, it's more like the people who come here change and evolve to conform to this place. It's really exciting to be a part of that—and I don't think I'll ever run out of things to photograph here." JOE RADA

See more of Kirt Witte's photography at http://theothersavannah.com.