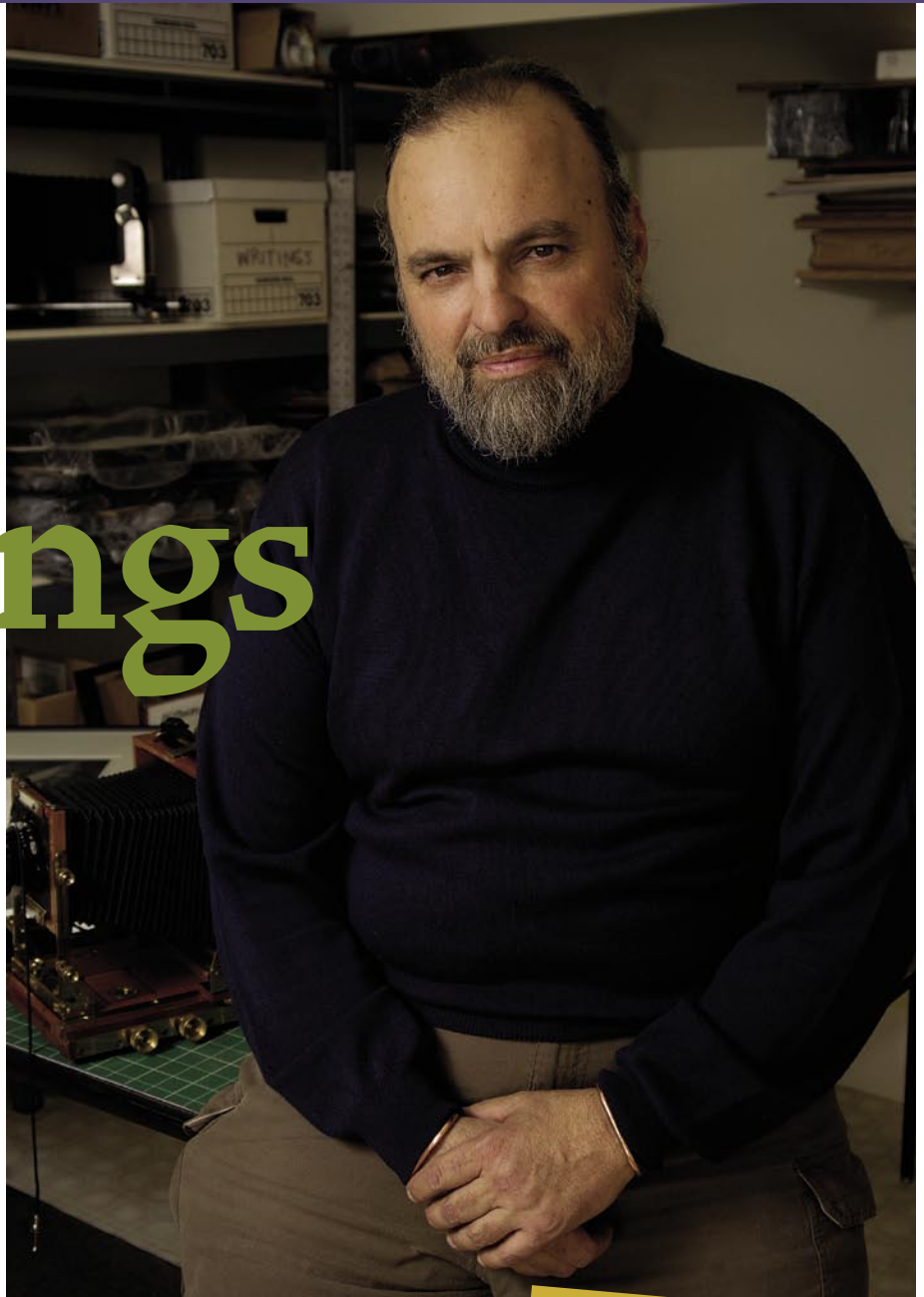


KIRK. Gittings

*Photographer,
Shelter From
The Storm*



Photos by Don James/ATM

ATM: You're well known as a photographer. What first sparked your interest?

Gittings: My father was an amateur photographer; I grew up with a dark room in my house. I used to help him develop pictures, so it's in my blood. The landscapes I take always have a human element to them. I've never been interested in natural landscapes. I've always been interested in landscapes that show some kind of human history.

ATM: Why's that?

Gittings: I grew up at Nine Mile Hill, at the very top of the highway going west before it

descends into the Rio Puerco. My brother and I used to roam around the countryside because there wasn't a whole lot else to do—we didn't have TV reception. There were the old Anasazi ruins down by the Rio Puerco. We also used to hike by the Petroglyphs and the volcanoes. It instilled in me an interest—first of all, in archaeology, which I studied at UNM before I switched to photography. Initially, I was photographing Chaco Canyon.

ATM: Did you expect to become a career photographer?

Gittings: When I first started, I wasn't making



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money. At one point I was doing a lot of other things for a living. I've been a Volkswagen mechanic, a union organizer, a welder, a whole range of things. Photography more as a hobby.

ATM: Are the images in this new book all from magazine work you've done?

Gittings: I took the black and white images in this book for myself—I really prefer black and white, personally. Almost all of the color work here was done as assignments for magazines—over half of it is for *New Mexico Magazine*, with whom I've worked for 25 years. There are four books that feature exclusively my photographs, and there are 32 now that I've contributed to.

ATM: How have you been involved with publishing your photography?

Gittings: I've shot more than a hundred magazine covers, and I've done a lot of work for overseas magazines—for Japanese architecture magazines such as *Nikkei Magazine* and a German magazine called *Ambiente*. I photograph stuff in New Mexico for magazines all over the world.

ATM: Wow—that's an immense body of work.

Gittings: I feel blessed, absolutely blessed. This book is definitely a landmark—almost mid-career. It is a nice summation of the things that I've done, things that are important to me. It's really great to be recognized by the state you live in. I thought I'd have to die before that happened.

ATM: Have you found you have a favorite subject to photograph?

Gittings: The Anasazi ruins, I think. I like the sense of history, of depth of time. I try to illustrate that, bring it out in my photographs—a sense of timelessness. I also like the sense of ruins blending and returning to the landscape.

ATM: So what are you working on now?

I'm currently working on another book. We don't have a title for it yet, but it's about mythological landscapes. For example, Mount Taylor because it appears in the mythology of numerous native tribes. It's a labor of love.

—By Karina Guzzi

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