

Michael Garlington is a photographer, master printer and sculptor. He is the son of a journalist and a photographer. Raised in Petaluma, California, he was influenced early on by the mix of hippies, poultry and dairy farmers, metal fabricators, bleeding hearts, artists and transients surrounding him. At 17, he began working with his mother and step father at their photographic lab in San Francisco, Spindler Photographic.

Working at Spindler Photographic was a turning point in Michael's life. He gained and mastered his skills at black and white film development and printing. The best photographers in the Bay Area at the time were clientele of Spindle Photographic and this exposure informed his composition and developed his dark room talent. By age 21, Garlington embarked on his own artistic mission, photographing the world around him, but more interestingly creating new worlds for his portraits to exist in. By building backdrops and sculptural elements to photograph he created what he calls photo-sculptures. His work captures luminous, yet often stark imagery encompassing the spectrum of human emotion and experience. The question became what to do with all these images.

In 2000, at the age of 23, Garlington embarked on PhotoCar across the US and Europe. He and artists of various backgrounds traveled in a car covered with his photos. The car initiated interactions with those they encountered along the way. On his trips across the US he thrives on capturing his version of the Americana.

Since 2004, Garlington has been featured in PhotoNY, PhotoLA, and PhotoSF. In 2005 a collection of his portraiture was published under the title, "Portraits from the Belly of the Whale." He has been exhibited in solo and group shows around the world. In 2009, his work was the target of an art heist in Connecticut. More recently, Garlington has been sought out for his installations.

Similar to the sculptures he creates for his photos, Garlington has moved towards creating longer lasting sculptures and art installations which can be experienced by viewers. In 2010, Garlington was sponsored by the National Endowment of the Arts and the Andy Warhol Visual Arts Foundation to create, "PHOTOHOUSE" for SF Camerawork. For Burning Man, Michael Garlington has been selected as part of their Honorarium Collection three times. The first was in 2012 with a 20' x 60' x 4' sculpture spelling out the word EGO. Each letter was comprised of intricately assembled hand poured plaster relics. In 2013, Garlington designed and built PhotoChapel, a gothic style chapel covered with black and white portraiture. The intricately gilded interior had plaster elements utilized in EGO, as well as an altar, confessional, and catacombs. PhotoChapel was 8 feet wide by twenty feet long and had a forty foot tall steeple. In 2014, Garlington brought Totem of Confessions to Burning Man. It is his largest project to date, with a thirty foot by thirty foot base and towering sixty feet overhead. The exterior was covered once again with Garlington's portraiture, with animals, succulents, flowers, and shells surrounding photos making each cell a miniature diorama. Within the Totem, there was a gilded confessional, colored murals reaching to the peak of a stained glass steeple bathing the interior with lush colored light. All sculptures created for Burning Man were burned in spectacular fiery deaths, yet live on in the many photos and memories of those who were there to experience them.

Looking towards the future, Garlington is collaborating with partner Natalia Bertotti. They have been working on projects together since 2013. Both inspire, learn and grow from each other's talents making art and in their adventures together. Their ambitions are set on creating permanent installations. Incorporating photography into the sculptures is a consistent theme. It becomes the most elaborate frame a photo could hope for. The detail and multiples levels within their work is their staple. The frame is a







© sara chieco







sculpture housing the photo-sculptural portrait laced with emotion that lies within the subject. With so many details to discover the viewer can see the same image or sculpture so many times and yet consistently uncover something new.

The next stage is towards permanent installations. Garlington and Bertotti have completed their first, a ceramic fountain at a private residence in their hometown of Petaluma. Currently they are working on museum installations as part of groups shows showcasing the Art of Burning Man. The first is at the Hermitage Museum and Gardens in Norfolk and they are in talks with the Renwick Gallery in Washington, DC for an installation in early 2018. They also look forward to returning to Burning Man with a large scale installation, The Chapel of Babel, yet the installation date is still to be determined.