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Gold Medal Winner

Sohm captures Independent Publishing Award for "Visions of America" book

Photographer-author Joseph Sohm, an internationally published photographer and resident of Ojai's Saddle Mountain, won the Gold Medal in the 13th annual Independent Publishing Awards for his recently published book, "Visions of America — Photographing Democracy." Sohm was awarded the gold medal in New York City in the category "Best Coffee Table Book," one of 65 categories within which the 4,090 books entered were judged.

"Visions of America" is a perceptive work about both the photographer and the photographed. Reflecting on the wisdom of the founders, coupled with personal observations about American history, Sohm takes us on an insightful journey down the back roads and byways of the U.S., ultimately leading to a deeper understanding and appreciation of who we are as a nation and a people. "Visions of America" is a

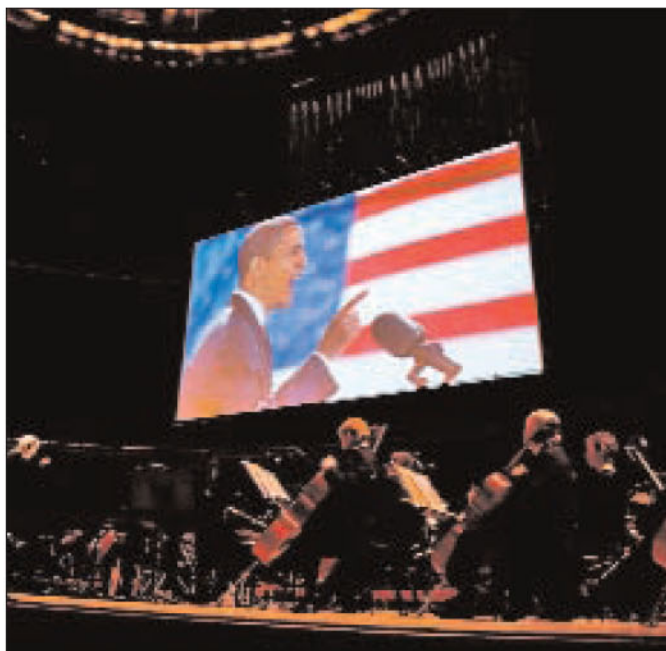


Photo by Joe Sohm

Presidential candidate Barack Obama as captured by award-winning photographer Joe Sohm.

sweeping portrait of life in the American democracy, a portrait that shows us ourselves, the United States.

Sohm recently spoke about his book at the National Press Club in

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Washington, D.C. and CSPAN's "Book Notes" aired his talk on July 3, 4 and 5.

"Visions of America" addresses a single question: How do you photograph democracy? After all, democracy is an "idea," and not something one can easily wrap one's lens around. But photographing democracy is indeed what Sohm has done in this epic journey across the 50 states. To capture this country's incredible diversity, Sohm framed his national work as George Seurat might a pointillist painting. With each photograph, an individual dot was applied to his American canvas. Spanning three decades, tens of thousands of images were assembled in what becomes a compelling mosaic. With a foreword by legendary travel writer, Paul Theroux, "Visions of America" is a work of historic value and significance.

"Visions of America" is not only a coffee-table book that can be treasured up close while turning page after iconic and memorable page. It is also a performance, a Photo-Symphony Concert for America, which received its world premiere under the baton of two-time Grammy Award-winning Peter Nero and The Philly Pops in historic Philadelphia in late January and early February, days after Barack Obama's inauguration as our 44th president. The original score was composed by Grammy-

winning, Oscar-nominated Roger Kellaway, also a Saddle Mountain resident and neighbor of Sohm. Lyrics are written by Oscar- and Grammy-winning Alan and Marilyn Bergman and the songs are sung by Grammy-winning vocalist Patti Austin. Featuring the vision and imagery of Sohm, "Visions of America" as a show takes audiences on a stirring visual-musical journey through the 50 states and explores the ideas, hopes and dreams that unite us as Americans.

Sohm's career trajectory took him from American History teacher to tenacious photo-historian. Over the course of 30 years, he has traveled throughout the United States and across the world, photographing people, celebrations, monuments, sports, cities, small towns and presidential campaigns. His photos have been published more than 50,000 times in publications which include National Geographic, Time, The New York Times, The Washington Post, as well as hundreds of textbooks and media including CNN, ABC, The History Channel and MSNBC. His work is featured in President Clinton's book "My Life" and in his Presidential Library. Sohm's images are featured in Frederick J. Ryan's portrait of Ronald Reagan, "The Great Communicator"; in Bill Maher's "Real Time"; in Al Gore's Oscar-winning film "An Inconvenient Truth"; in NBC's memorial for 9/11, "Concert for America"; on the "Today Show" and on



Photo by Joe Sohm

Historic Philadelphia was the site of Joe Sohm's "Visions of America" multimedia event, which featured the songs of

the cover of John Grisham's novel "King of Torts." During coverage of the contested 2000 presidential election, a photograph of Sohm's was chosen for both the covers of Newsweek and U.S. News and World Report. In addition, the U.S. Department of State displays his work in

more than 10 embassies around the globe, and Sohm produced the official 1993 presidential inaugural music-video for MTV, which aired worldwide.

Sohm has been a keynote speaker at more than 100 colleges, universities and trade associations across America. This prolific artist is also frequently written about. Both he and his work have been profiled in Esquire magazine, USA Today, the LA. Times, The New York Times, The San Francisco Examiner, C-Span, Lexus magazine and at the Newseum Museum in Washington, D.C. Sohm also serves on the boards of The Museum of Democracy in New York City and the New

Ojai's Roger Kellaway and Alan and Marilyn Bergman, and performances by Patti Austin and Peter Nero.

West Symphony in Southern California.

Travel author Theroux, in his introduction to "Visions of America," says, "Joseph Sohm has an unblinking eye and a gift for summing up a whole complex mood in a single shot. There is a great deal of love in his photographs, but dedication too." Broadcast journalist John Milewski who manages the Special Programs for Newseum, says this about Sohm's book: "So how do you photograph democracy? Well the answer provided by this book is that you set Joseph Sohm loose with his camera. Fifty states (and beyond) later, 'Visions of America' is certainly a grand technical achieve-

ment, but it's so much more than that as well. It's all here — the beauty, the icons, the contradictions, the wisdom, and the yearning for that more perfect union. When you look at America through Sohm's view finder you will see truths revealed. The dream of America and the promise of democracy come alive through images both new and familiar. This is a journey worth taking again and again. Dazzling, stunning, and profoundly American."

"Visions of America" may be purchased at Amazon.com. Sohm can also be contacted by writing to info@visionsofamerica.com, or calling 649-2555.