

# DHL Gallery:

By Jordan Mantz

## RICHARD S. McWHERTER



Western Pennsylvania has a long tradition of inspiring some of the most dynamic artists in the world. The splendor of Pittsburgh's three rivers, the character of its quaint neighborhoods and communities, and the beautiful rolling hills capture the imagination of so many artists who are continuously interpreting the landscape through their work.

Richard S. McWherter is one of these incredible artists, and he expresses his love for the region through his camera. Now McWherter has compiled a collection of his finest photos in a new hardcover book titled *The Walkwood Album*.

*The Walkwood Album* – named for the phrase “walk in the woods” – is a 38-page book featuring some incredible examples of contemporary fine art photography that this talented artist has created over the years. McWherter's unique inspiration, which is clearly revealed through the images, comes from the Laurel Highlands and Chestnut Ridge areas.

*The Walkwood Album*, which features 16 full-color photographs, is a major milestone for McWherter. What's interesting is that it began as a simple idea from his childhood memories. “This theme began as a remembrance of the many hours that my grandfather and I would spend hiking on



Adams Falls (from the Walkwood Album, #0702)

his wooded property in the Chestnut Ridge area near his home here in Pennsylvania,” says McWherter, whose grandfather owned the land with a vision of seeing it developed as a place where people would build homes and prosper. “I would often spend time with him in what we all called ‘the ridge,’ as he surveyed and calculated the layout of his plan.” McWherter says he laments the fact that much of the wooded playground of his youth has changed over the years. “Over time, the places where I caught tadpoles and crayfish, followed deer trails, drank from clear mountain springs and dreamed of adventure, were eventually paved and landscaped with people's homes and driveways.”

Although there are many photographs in the book from places along “the ridge,” McWherter didn't begin to work professionally on this theme until many of those childhood spots were gone. “Because of that,” he says, “my efforts in this work were not to document a place, but rather a feeling that one might get on any day, on any given walk in the woods.”

The book's images are from a portfolio of work that McWherter has created using high-end professional camera equipment and state-of-the-art digital tools to meet his original vision. Each image is also available as a fine art gallery print that he creates himself, using the archival giclee





**Top:** Linn Run Trail, Rector PA. **Above:** Untitled (from the Walkwood Album, #0603)

printing process for the highest degree in image quality and stability.

McWherter acknowledges the influence of other artists in his work, including the Hudson River artists, painter Asher B. Durand and the Romantics, and Caspar David Friedrich, to name a few. And of course, the artwork and writings of Ansel Adams has influenced a generation of artists, including McWherter, and established the profession of the fine art photographer.

Young artists are often told to write or illustrate what they know best. McWherter took this advice to heart. He didn't grow up in a New World wilderness, an untamed

frontier or a national park. He was born and raised in the post-industrial Rust Belt of America, with telephone poles, abandoned vehicles and empty factories blocking his camera's viewfinder. "I believed, however, that if I couldn't find beauty here, in the place of my birth, then I would be forever lost in my journey as an artist."

McWherter has worked in many different jobs in his career as a visual artist, starting out as a photojournalist and a photo illustrator for advertising, both while still in high school. His work has been seen in many local publications and art exhibitions, and has also been reproduced

in national magazines for fine art photography. Later in his career, he earned a bachelor of fine arts from Seton Hill University. In 1996, he began teaching visual arts at the high school in his hometown of Derry, Pennsylvania, where he now serves as the Art Department Chair.

McWherter has received many awards for his photographic art, as well as for his innovative ideas in teaching, all of which has earned him recognition from many regional, state, national and international organizations. He continues to work on this and many other photographic portfolios and art projects here in Western Pennsylvania, where he lives with his wife Kimberly.

When describing his efforts in photographing the beauty of Western Pennsylvania, and specifically the Laurel Highlands, McWherter is just as passionate about his own artwork. "These are places that I've grown up in, of course; but these are also places I like to be. I can remember as a child being stuck inside at my grandparents' house while it was raining outside and taking the time to look at a painting that hung in their home. It was a reproduction of a wilderness landscape, and I thought, 'I wish I was there right now.'"

It's always refreshing to see local artists highlight the distinctive landscape of Western Pennsylvania. McWherter's art is not just charming; it also captures the spirit of this region's great outdoors. If you love outdoor photography and Western Pennsylvania, *The Walkwood Album* will be a wonderful addition to your collection.

*The Walkwood Album* is available on-line through [www.blurb.com](http://www.blurb.com) and also on McWherter's website: [www.walkwood.net](http://www.walkwood.net)

