



BY ELISABETH F. VENETIOU
PHOTOS BY GREG BROWN

From the sky
DOWN

*The Aerial Photography
of Greg Brown*

In his exhibit, “Views from the Flying Carpet: Fine Art Aerial Photographs,” photographer, author and aviation expert Greg Brown takes us on a ride in his four-person Cessna. “Flying is by nature episodic,” Brown said. “If you look at any one photograph you won’t get the big picture. But if you walk around and see all of the images, it’s as if you’ve been along on some of my adventures.”

While some aerial photographers have a particular shot in mind, Brown is more of a discovery artist. “I’m flying from here to there. I keep my eyes open and my camera ready. From a personal standpoint, I’m looking for great photos but what intrigues me most are things that are unexpected for someone who doesn’t fly.”

Many of Brown’s images demonstrate this attraction to the unexpected. One of Brown’s favorites, “New Mexico Lava Field,” shows an ancient lava field by Las Cruces from a unique perspective. In “Superstition Mountains Mist” the saguaro silhouettes are visible along the ridge. “Ships of the Desert” features the Hopi mesas toward the Painted Desert. “It was a windy day with a lot of dust in the air. To me, the promontories over the plateau capture the spirit of the Southwest.”

A longtime resident of Arizona, Brown considers himself lucky to live in the Southwest. “It’s one of the most beautiful landscapes in the world. I fly over these amazing places—Sedona, the Grand Canyon, or Meteor Crater — and opportunities present themselves.” Brown shoots most of his images between 1,000 and 4,000 feet, in conditions ideal for aerial photography. “The land is high here and the air is clear. Flying low, we see things that others don’t see. I can’t fly over flowers without taking a photograph,” he said. The inherent stability of the plane allows Brown to photograph the landscape as the pilot, or sometimes his wife flies while he shoots the camera.

With an MFA in art and design and an airplane key in his pocket, Brown describes himself as an artist who flies. An accomplished pilot logging more than 8,500 hours in the air as well as the author of numerous books and a long running column for Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association *Flight Training* magazine, Brown is thrilled to exhibit his aerial photographs. “My palette is my camera and my pen. There are a lot of reasons to fly, but for me, it has been the view out the window.”



TOP: SUNSET OVER WINDOW ROCK, LEFT: SEDONA SNOW

Bringing the view from the window of his Cessna, which he calls “The Flying Carpet,” to a fine arts show required Brown to collaborate with Master Printer Richard Jackson. “I had always entertained the thought of creating art quality prints.” After capturing a stunning image of the sunset between two thunderstorms, Brown contacted Jackson. “I called Richard and said ‘I’m ready to go.’”



Brown was emboldened by the collaborative perspective with which Jackson and his team approach photographic prints. “I would have not known where to start,” Brown said. Now the two begin with several images and look at them together. “Sometimes Richard feels that some are not going to survive the transition because of resolution or sharpness. He has the expertise to tune an image so that the print is as great as it appears on a backlit screen.” Learning which images have the potential to be developed has influenced the way Brown photographs. “My attention to detail is much greater.”

While the composition of the images belongs exclusively to Brown, he is grateful for the assistance from Jackson’s team, particularly with the levels in the images. “When you have high contrast, it is difficult not to blow it out. Richard and I discuss it, his team makes new prints and we discuss it again. We may do this three, four or five times. Then we make match prints. They are definitely my images but Richard adds a dimension I could never do. I have the highest regard for him.”

Another man who Brown holds in high regard is his father, a doctor and pilot who was involved with aviation medicine on a national

level. “My dad owned airplanes before I was born. My father said if you want to become a pilot, I’ll finance your first license. I took him up on that. This past November was my 40th year of flying.”

Brown’s father was also an avid photographer and provided Brown with a box camera when he was young. “When I was 11 or 12 years old, I was eager to get a good camera.” Brown’s father helped him pick out a book on photography, and then quizzed him around the dinner table. “I passed that test and he bought me a good 35 millimeter camera. I was the photographer for the high school newspaper and won an award, which set me down a path. I’ve always enjoyed it.”

Brown continues to enjoy flying as well. “My favorite part of flying is taking someone for their first flight in a small plane. In an hour I have given them a gift they will remember for the rest of their lives. I love taking people along for the ride.”

Greg Brown’s fine art photography is currently on display at Northern Arizona University’s College of Arts and Letters’ Riles Hall through the end of June. His prints will be displayed at Flagstaff’s Radisson Woodlands Restaurant during July and August. Brown hopes to do more exhibits in the future. “I have a lot of images that I enjoy.” Buckle up, northern Arizona, and enjoy the ride. 🏔️

 **LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ARTIST AT:** www.gregbrownflyingcarpet.com