



THORNBURY — Jack Gilbert has spent his working life in the courtroom and boardroom, but his love has become the digital darkroom.

The Toronto-based corporate and securities lawyer will be hosting a show of his fine-art photography at the Loft Gallery in Clarksburg, June, 2014. He will be presenting a demonstration of Photoshop at 4.

Now 86, Gilbert has been a photographer for the last dozen years, utilizing the Photoshop software program to manipulate and refine his photos.

He also comes by his love of photography naturally; his father started a photography studio in 1922, which continues under his older brother, Albert Gilbert, a Member of the Order of Canada and a fellow of several international photographic societies.

“I’ve gone from when my dad was photographing on glass plate to where I’m pushing around pixels,” he said. “When I take shots, I’m as detailed with my work as any artist with a paintbrush.”

As a youngster, Gilbert would help his father in the darkroom, but notes the abilities of Photoshop and the “digital revolution... is extraordinary.

“(The program) is just superior,” said Gilbert, noting he has essentially immersed himself in the program for the last 12 or 13 years, and now gives courses on how to use the software, on composition and design, and lectures on the history of photography. “I’m just overwhelmed by the power of the program.”

Not only has he pored over the documentation that comes with the program, Gilbert has voraciously read third-party books and help-guides.

“With my background as a lawyer, I’m used to reading and studying,” he said. “There’s a lot of free material online, and books.”

Where most people will take a digital photograph and post it to social media, or have it printed, untouched, Gilbert will manipulate his photos, utilizing Photoshop’s options for layers, colour correction, and filters.

“The post-production is the key to it all,” he said. “This is beyond just pushing a button.”

However, as Gilbert notes in his lectures, art is not about the tools used to make it; it is about the artist’s understanding and appreciation of the organization of colour, line, composition, rhythm, perspective, balance and their interplay to support the subject matter or intent.

“The photographer, like the traditional paint and brush artist, is the authorizing factor,” Gilbert noted in a recent lecture on the history of photography to the Arts and Letters Club of Toronto. “A brush on canvas or a photographer’s computer code and processor are simply the tools of the art making process; without the artist or photographer’s involvement, they are merely inert ‘stuff’.

“A photograph can qualify as art but it does not automatically become art simply by virtue of being a photograph.”

The family owns property in the area — Gilbert’s daughter lives in the Collingwood area — and he was one of the founders of the Alpine Ski Club. His wife of 62 years hails from Meaford.

Gilbert uses much of his photographic work to raise money for [Make-A-Wish Canada](#), which grants wishes of children with serious medical conditions.

“I’ve studied all the various charities, and I was horrified by the amount spent on administration,” he said. “Then I found Make-A-Wish, and to me, the work they’re trying to do is remarkable.

“They’re administrative costs are minimal, and they do a heck of a job.”