Richard Christiani

PHOTO EXHIBIT:
THE TIBETAN PEOPLE OF THE HIMALAYAN REGION

Biographical Snapshot

A native Californian, Richard Christiani combines a lifelong involvement with photography, art and architecture with a love of the mountains and an interest in Tibetan Buddhism. In addition to undergraduate and graduate studies in architecture at U.C. Berkeley, he has formal training in both photography and art.

Rick grew up in the Bay Area, hiking and skiing with his family in the Sierra Nevada. After high school, he spent a lot of time in Yosemite Valley climbing and living in Camp 4 with other rock climbers. Whether he was ascending Yosemite’s big walls, climbing glaciers in Canada or skiing off peaks in the Andes, his Nikkon was always with him during his adventures. He found it sharpened his appreciation and memory of the wild and beautiful places he loved.

He shared that love with his wife Linnea and their two children, too. They took long backpack trips in the Sierra every summer, hiking the John Muir Trail and other routes in the Ansel Adams, Kings Canyon and Mineral King areas. In addition to the load on his back, Rick would always carry a camera, tripod and an assortment of lenses to record their journeys and capture the magnificent scenery around them.

In 1997, after photographing Mont Blanc and the Matterhorn on a ski tour in the Alps and red rock canyons in the American southwest the previous year, Rick shattered his ankle in a climbing accident. With his access to the mountains limited, he then looked for beauty in urban landscapes. He traveled to European and Japanese cities, photographing buildings, temples and other details and forms that caught his trained eye. But he missed the mountains and tried hiking again in 2003, despite the discomfort. When he found it was tolerable, he signed up for a trek in Bhutan the next year with his wife. During that trip, Rick fell in love with the Himalayas. He also felt a strong affinity with the Buddhist culture and the people he met there. “Mountain people” like himself. He’d felt a similar connection with the indigenous people of the Andes on an expedition twenty-five years before.

When they returned from Bhutan, Rick and Linnea began a study program at the Tibetan Nyingma Institute in Berkeley to learn more about Buddhism. They also went back to the Himalayas for more adventures: to Mt. Kachengjunga in Sikkim, the North Col of Everest, the Annapurna circuit and the summit of Mt. Pisang in Nepal. In the process, Rick amassed a large collection of digital photographs of the area.

This past fall, they returned to Nepal again to do two treks. The first was from Simikot in western Nepal into Tibet, to Lake Manasarovar and around Mount Kailash. Kang Rinpoche, as it’s known to the Tibetans, is their holiest of mountains and like the lake, an important Buddhist pilgrimage site. The second trek was into the Upper Dolpo in western Nepal, a wild, desolate region on the backside of Mt. Dhaulagiri which is populated by Tibetans. The Dolpo’s remoteness and inaccessibility has preserved its Tibetan culture in relatively pure form. Peter Matthiessen wrote about it in The Snow Leopard and it was the site of the movie Himalaya. Rick’s photographs capture the stark beauty of both places as well as the devoutness of the Tibetan people.

Richard Christiani is President of Christiani Johnson Architects, an award-winning San Francisco Firm. He currently lives in Berkeley, CA. with his wife. His current camera of choice is a Canon 5D Mark II w/ Canon L series lenses.

This exhibit is sponsored by the Tibetan Aid Project, a nonprofit organization that raises funds to support and promote education and literacy in the Tibetan communities in the Himalayan region.

Tibetan Aid Project 510.848.4238 www.tibetanaidproject.org