

Carp Fair Obsessions: A Night at the Fair

Growing up in the Ottawa Valley, I attended the Carp Fair nearly every year following my first visit in grade two. We left school by yellow busload for a day to see the agricultural, homemaking, and school exhibits, and went back on the weekend with our families for the rides and horse shows. Over the years, I've gone with friends, siblings, and later, with my own children.

I began photographing the fair about 7 years ago, with the excuse that I was there with my kids anyway...it has become an obsession of sorts. To this day I love being around the smells, the sounds, the wonderful light and colour of the fair at night. I feel truly at home there, and often wait for the moment when it begins to quiet down; then I remember.

As a teenager, the fair was all about the midway at night. The fall fair was our last stab at summer and we'd soak up every single minute of it.

Toward the end of the evenings, as crowds thinned, music and screaming from the rides subsided and the grinding gears of the motors quieted, we'd realize it was time to find our way home...but no one ever wanted to go. The emptied pathways from the gaming alleys to the rides became eerie yet welcoming. The midway seemed to offer itself to us; it was our very own stage.



A Night at the Fair: Bench



A Night at the Fair: Ferris Wheel



A Night at the Fair: Sizzler

The wildly colourful lights of the fairgrounds were exotic against the velvety and endless night sky, and the shadows masked cheap displays and the dirt on the carny's faces. Every person and every thing sparkled; we were exotic too, at least for a while.

That is the time that I loved the most, and that is the time that I am trying to capture.

Welcome to **A Night at the Fair.**

Mary Spicer