



the
photographic
angle

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC ANGLE PROMOTES EDUCATION OF THE PUBLIC IN THE ART AND SCIENCE OF PHOTOGRAPHY BY STAGING EXHIBITIONS AND BY WORKING WITH PROFESSIONAL, STUDENT AND AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHERS



OUR STORIES

Humans have been sharing stories since time immemorial. This common social and cultural activity serves many purposes from sharing memories and preserving our history, to promoting ideas and instilling moral values, right through to simple entertainment. Photography is a great means of storytelling and it is often said that 'a picture is worth a thousand words'. However, photography and visual storytelling are not necessarily the same thing. Anyone can take a photograph, but telling a rich story through photography is another matter entirely.

By using a camera to tell a visual story, you not only capture a moment in time, you also suggest an underlying narrative that hints at something much bigger. A good storyteller will invite you in and make you feel part of their story. They will create a special bond between the audience and the subject of the story, stirring emotion and moving the viewer.

'Our Stories' is an exhibition devoted to documentary photography, which is often used to chronicle events or environments both significant and relevant to history and historical events as well as everyday life.

The photographers who are featured in this exhibition have been successful because they have created stories that matter to them and they have shared with us a tiny insight into their own story. Some of the best stories that we see here are also the simplest and it is often the details that enrich the story and impart the most information. On the other hand, this exhibition also features images that invite curiosity, where the viewer is left with unanswered questions and the story is left untold.

Participating Photographers: Claire Homewood, Misha Maslennikov, Luc Kordas, Vanessa Terán, Miguel Angel Lozano Bonora, Derick Whitson, Abhijit Chakraborty, Onele Mahlangeni, Lee Barry, Terence Lee Ji Long, Somnath Mukherjee, Jophel Botero Ybiosa, David Shaw, Hayley Langan, Alex Cruceru, Sagar Shiriskar, Anurag Arora, Siddharth Haobijam, Alex Mason

O
U
R
S
T
O
R
I
E
S

PHOTOGRAPHER PROFILES

Abhijit Chakraborty

Project title: Passion, relation, forbearance

This series of photographs explores the passions, environment and rituals of Mr Sushil Kumar Chattopadhyay from Kolkata, India. Through his story, the photographer Abhijit Chakraborty opens up questions about mankind's relationship to inanimate objects, our obsessions with 'collecting' and the psychology of sentimental attachment. Mr Chattopadhyay has been collecting a variety of rare and precious materials throughout his life. What makes them valuable to him is not their monetary value, but his ability to personally connect with these items that others have thrown away.

Chakraborty explains how Mr Chattopadhyay handles each object with love, caring for them, fixing them, cleaning them and even talking to them. To him they are priceless, unsellable and an integral part of his identity. Chakraborty's motivation for documenting and telling this story that began a year ago, comes from his interest in the idiosyncrasies of each individual's way of life. The subject of his story makes clear black and white character types unattainable. The mystery and uniqueness that surrounds the story of Mr Chattopadhyay shows the 'grey areas' of identity that blur the boundaries of life.



O
U
R
S
T
O
R
I
E
S

PHOTOGRAPHER PROFILES

Alex Cruceru

Project title: The invisible people

Alex Cruceru's street photography focuses on what he refers to as 'The Invisible People'. Most of us pass hundreds of people every day out on the streets, people we don't know, people we have no connection to. They are strangers to us, and we in return are strangers to them. Cruceru's photography draws our attention to the unfamiliar faces we pass on the street, and gives us a glimpse of the myriad lives, different from our own.

This series points towards a fundamental quality of photography, that of assumption. Looking at a photograph of somebody we don't know can only ever reveal a fragment of a story, a moment in their life. The rest of the story is what we choose, whether consciously or not, to imagine. We add detail to the image that we're looking at, filling in the gaps, making assumptions about what led them to that moment, and what life they may have led. It's testament to a good photograph, how much it evokes our imagination, and also how much it challenges it.



O
U
R
S
T
O
R
I
E
S

PHOTOGRAPHER PROFILES

Alex Mason

Project title: Encountering Gypsies

The nomadic lifestyle of gypsies frequents the media with an unfavoured bias based on generalisations. Alex Mason's photography takes a personal look at the small number of vast gypsy communities living in the UK today. To capture these images, Alex visited a local gypsy site on numerous occasions, gaining the trust of the community and hearing the stories of the people living there. Mason's photographs are preceded by long conversations with the subjects he captures, spending time listening to childhood memories, and their experiences with society at large. Mason would revisit the site with the photographs he had taken the previous day, reciprocating the generous nature he encountered.



O
U
R
S
T
O
R
I
E
S

PHOTOGRAPHER PROFILES

Anurag Arora

Project title: Ladakh

After many years of trying to visit Ladakh, a disputed territory between India and Pakistan in the region of Jammu and Kashmir, Anurag Arora made it there in May 2011. For the first few days he stayed in the vicinity of the capital city Leh, capturing panoramic views of the urban areas. After this, Arora left for the Numra Valley, which is famous for its cold sand dunes. Surrounded by the Himalayan mountains he wound his way up over the highest vehicle pass in the world, Khardung La, before heading back down through Nubra sandstorms to Tso Moriri lake, which is protected as a wetland reserve and home to many exotic species. Arora describes the landscapes of Ladakh as if they were on another planet; the sheer expanses of sky and mountains and the beauty of the natural world.



O
U
R
S
T
O
R
I
E
S

PHOTOGRAPHER PROFILES

Claire Homewood

Project title: The Kraal

"Growing up in middle class South Africa, it was quite normal to have a cleaning lady who washed our dishes and made our beds. She lived in a room at the side of our house during the week, disappearing back to an informal settlement over the weekends and home to the Transkei (an independent homeland during the apartheid era) for the holidays. Her name was Sylvia and when I was 13, her 9-year-old grand daughter came to live with us. We grew up as sisters and she now teaches and lives in South Korea.

"In January 2011, I took a journey into the Transkei to connect with this part of my family. My visit coincided with the funeral of Sylvia's brother's wife and these images are from that day. I was allowed into the Kraal (a space where woman don't usually enter) and experienced the slaughter and the dismemberment of a cow and 5 sheep.

"The funeral ceremony was a seven-hour process during which a team of women tended the fires and prepared salads and side dishes to the meat. Most of the village attended the funeral and on its completion ate the long awaited foods.

I photographed without the intention of making a specific statement, although my being vegetarian and sensitive to violent imagery made it a complex task. I was pleased for the experience of witnessing something so far removed from my normal life yet part of the interlaced Xhosa and Christian traditions of my extended family."



O
U
R
S
T
O
R
I
E
S

PHOTOGRAPHER PROFILES

David Shaw

Project title: The Palestinian Olive Harvest (2011)

The Olive Harvest has been an important annual event for the inhabitants of the West Bank for generations. The Olive Trees are a sign of peace and prosperity and the Palestinians proudly harvest the trees by hand every year. It is the time when many Palestinians return to their family's village with whole communities coming together to get the work done. Communities celebrate as the olives are brought in and the village olive press is turned on for its annual night shift.

Since the beginning of the occupation of Palestine by Israel, the West Bank Palestinians have come under constant oppression when trying to harvest their olives. They are attacked by Israeli soldiers and ideological settlers as well as being prevented from going to their own lands due to 'security reasons'. The Israeli army often create new laws and 'closed military zones' that prevent the farmers from getting to their trees.

The trees are vandalised and burnt throughout the year by the settlers and much of the farm land has already been made un-farmable, as well as having Israeli settlements built upon the land that used to belong to Palestinian farmers. This has made the economic side of the harvest profitless. The harvest has become more than a source of income for the Palestinians. It is now a form of non-violent resistance.

The Palestinians know that if they stop working on the land and give it up then Israel will just demand more. The harvest has become more about standing their ground, staying on the map, continuing to exist as a people.



O
U
R
S
T
O
R
I
E
S

PHOTOGRAPHER PROFILES

Derick Whitson

Project title: Strike Fitness Outlaw: Mixed Martial Arts

In this short series, Derick Whitson documents mixed martial arts (MMA). As an outsider, Whitson entered this unfamiliar territory in order to talk to the individuals involved in this sport and better understand how this 'art-form' is practised. The facility that Whitson visited, called Strike-Fitness-Outlaw, opened in late December 2011. The fighters that attend the MMA courses are trained in Boxing, Kick Boxing, Maui Thai, Wrestling, Jujutsu and Judo learning a variety of techniques before focusing on one discipline. The students come from different backgrounds, and include school children to adults. Whitson's approach to documenting the practice of MMA was to personally get to know some of the individuals training there. This intimacy is reflected in his choice of photography, favouring the grainy black and white images of film photography, using the medium to mirror the story being told. His slow film speed captures the gritty raw atmosphere of the members and the location, supplementing the photographs with statements from his subjects that reveal their personal investment in MMA.

One of these characters is called Ian, he has just started in Strike Fitness Outlaw and has been hoping to use this competitively in the near future.

"My cousin was an OSU assistant wrestling coach" says Ian. "When he committed suicide I was in a dark place. He was a very close relative of mine and got me started up in wrestling. I stumbled across Outlaw MMA and was hired by Phace to be their wrestling coach. I am looking to compete in the cage in the near future, and/or defensive combat"



O
U
R
S
T
O
R
I
E
S

PHOTOGRAPHER PROFILES

Hayley Langan

Project title: Secrets

This series is an excerpt from a much larger project of black and white portraits featuring one hundred teens anonymously exposing their bodies and souls for the camera. The story behind the series powerfully portrays common struggles that these American teens, and teens around the world, have to face everyday. Whether it's a battle with guilt, regret, issues at home and at school, or a long-term struggle with self-image, there will always be hardships to overcome. The inspiration for this series stems from the photographer's own personal struggles and the need to confess things in a creative outlet and in turn, reaching out to others who felt the same. "Recruiting the models was a tough task in the beginning phase of the project," explains Hayley Langan, "but as the weeks turned to months, there was no shortage of eager models to strip down, literally and emotionally, to be a part of the series." The completed series has had a surprisingly overwhelming and positive reception from those who have followed it.



O
U
R
S
T
O
R
I
E
S

PHOTOGRAPHER PROFILES

Jophel Botero Ybiosa

Project title: The People of Sulu

This series by Filipino artist Jophel Botero Ybiosa is called "The People of Sulu" and depicts different images of people living in Sulu, an autonomous island province of the Philippines located in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

Sulu is a diverse community of Muslims and Christians. The Tausugs dominate the Sulu Archipelago and are considered amongst the first habitants of the Philippines who embraced Islam as their religion and way of life. The Tausug are referred to as 'people of the current', reflective of their close ties to the sea.

Based on a survey conducted by the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) in 2011, Sulu is considered the poorest province in the Philippines with a poverty incidence level of 63.2 percent. Poverty is also caused by graft and corruption. But despite the poverty, the people of Sulu remain hopeful towards the future.



O
U
R
S
T
O
R
I
E
S

PHOTOGRAPHER PROFILES

Lee Barry

Project title: The old dancing was lovely

This photographic series by Lee Barry tells the story of his Grandmother, Jane Barry. She lives alone in a normal house, in a normal estate, no different from the ones you pass every day. But inside her life is not as it was. Three years ago, her husband died and it changed her life completely. She went from being an outgoing, confident and active person to a frail, dependant and hidden person. Most of her days are spent inside, looking out at the world, waiting, as it passes her by, seemingly no longer a part of it, as if her life had been frozen in place. This project tells the time immemorial tale of loved ones left behind, a story we are all, or will all be touched by and affected by, a universal story of everyday life and death.

Lee Barry began the project after noticing the changes in his grandmother, and seeing how she changed after the family's loss. The heart-felt compassion led him to try to understand the different ways in which people live with the passing of life. Some people are strong and are able to carry on, others are not and are unable to look past the grief and change, and they become stuck in a life they no longer see as normal. Too much has changed for them and they know no other life without their partner and find it hard to continue.



O
U
R
S
T
O
R
I
E
S

PHOTOGRAPHER PROFILES

Luc Kordas

Project title: Latin American Everyday Life

In 2011, Luc Kordas travelled through Latin America to document some of the jaw-dropping landscapes of Central and South America. However, his focus was hastily captured by the everyday lives of the people he met there. Kordas explains that showing the everyday struggles and joys of life is the best way to depict a country or a continent – simply through its inhabitants. He travelled from Cuba, through Mexico, Guatemala, and Panama to Colombia, seeing school kids coming home, playing with each other or helping their parents with their chores. He saw bus drivers having a break, tobacco farmers working while smoking their own cigars, and sailors enjoying sunsets while sailing the Caribbean Sea. He was witness to the colourful spectrum of emotions that were experienced in daily life: happiness, sadness, euphoria, anger, curiosity, fear, hopefulness, despair, optimism and uncertainty. "I saw their lives. I saw Latin America through the eyes of the communities living there. And I took pictures of it," says Kordas.

There are many unique moments photographed in this series that undoubtedly stand out as distinct to Latin America and are different from lives lived elsewhere in the world. However, the series also carries a universal message. We all share similarities in the ways in which we work and live, how we laugh, we worry, we love, we hate, we hope, we play, and we recognise difference. In this we share humanity.



O
U
R
S
T
O
R
I
E
S

PHOTOGRAPHER PROFILES

Miguel Angel Lozano Bonora

Title: Afghan Children

Afghanistan is one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world. For the past thirty years, it has been in constant upheaval, attracting international attention, and in a state of War with the USA and the United Kingdom. Humanitarian access has become increasingly difficult. Seventy-eight districts have been listed as highly dangerous and inaccessible by the United Nations. NGOs have frequently been attacked during the delivery of aid to civilians with incidents of their staff being attacked, kidnapped or killed during aid delivery missions.

The conflict between government groups and Afghan forces continues today, despite five years of attempts to restore the peace. Informal settlements increase in number across the southern regions, as the number of displaced persons continues to rise. Afghanistan tops the list of countries with the largest number of refugees worldwide, more than a quarter of its population has sought refuge outside the country.

Almost 30 years of conflict have left thousands of Afghan children without access to education; they are needed by their families to contribute to the household and thus forced into work. Many families are torn between the desire for their children to have a better life, to attend school, and the need for them to earn a living: "The best thing for my children is to stay alive, even if it means that they must be illiterate," said one parent. The economic crisis of families such as this is exasperated by the fighting, "a child never knows if they will be trapped by fire-fight on the road to school."

In this project, Miguel Angel Lozano Bonora reflects on the brief moments when a simple gesture, a smile perhaps, is enough to remind us that children are a fundamental part of our humanity.



O
U
R
S
T
O
R
I
E
S

PHOTOGRAPHER PROFILES

Misha Maslennikov

Project title: The Don Steppe

Misha Maslennikov was born in the sixties in a city called Dobroe close to Moscow. In 2002, Maslennikov began a series of expeditions into Northern Russia, visiting remote and isolated settlements such as coenobites living in monasteries, the keepers of ancient temples.

"Picture yourself in the midst of the steppe, somewhere out in the open, looking at the horizon. You find your gaze drawn beyond this meeting of earth and sky, to the far side of the visible, so much that you can see, this inexorable boundary. What's out there? What kind of life beyond imagination? Perhaps something utterly different, utterly unknown: seas and mountains, the crystalline glint of office windows in concrete canyons, elegant shop windows, the fireplaces of ski lodges? Perhaps climbing the corporate ladder with its strict dress code, or beach volleyball in stylish bikinis? But you stand there for a while in silence, just a bit longer, and all this falls away. There is only the earth under your feet, near and far, as far as the eye can see, and the sky above your head, around you and about you, and it all runs together as one, even within you, and it's as if there is no longer an observer. And you want to understand, you long to glimpse the sense of it, to unravel the riddle of nature, in yourself and in the creation around you, to suddenly grasp why you ended up here. There was something else...

"Ah yes, it's time to head home. You whistle to the dog, who's tagged along for the walk, you gather the cut reeds from the ravine at the bend in the river for wattling and to repair the roof, you bring in water and firewood, and you water the garden. Then you fix the sagging fence of the livestock pen, you feed the chickens and the pigs, and you meet the herd of cows coming in from the pasture urging them into the cowshed. What else? There's never any lack of chores on the farm. Milk the cows, clean the fish, and prepare the leavening for the bread. You don't neglect the cats, but they would have been sure to remind you of that themselves in any case."



PHOTOGRAPHER PROFILES

Sagar Shiriskar

Project title: The Sleeper Class

The railways in India have always been known for holding many stories and for throwing together an interesting variety of people in one compartment. A journey on the Indian railways always leaves you with another story to be told.

The 'Sleeper Class' series came about when Sagar Shiriskar was travelling to Delhi on the Amritsar Express, a journey that takes thirty long hours and leaves passengers with little else to do but talk to each other and keep themselves occupied with card-games and idle chatter that sometimes ends up revealing a lot about them. The fact that you may not ever meet these people again is in itself a reason for them to confide in you. Through his travels, Shiriskar has met many such 'strangers', sharing his journeys with them and capturing them on camera. Shiriskar explains: "There were some who weren't so inclined to talk; but they had such arresting faces that I was drawn to them instinctively. This was the trigger in my photographing the 'Sleeper Class'."



O
U
R
S
T
O
R
I
E
S

PHOTOGRAPHER PROFILES

Onele Mahlangeni

Project title: Thantasa (Xhosa word for 'Seeking Balance')

Onele Mahlangeni is from Cape Town, South Africa, and is an environmental conservationist and enthusiast. He is passionate about nature, but often feels isolated and disconnected from his community as they do not feel the same way. In his work, Onele explores the balance between nature and man in marginalised communities. He documents the impact that people, contexts and histories have on spaces.

Onele often sits quietly with his camera as an observer and watches people pass by a space or spaces (as seen in 'Passing by'). He notices young children, loud teenagers, mothers, fathers, grandfathers and grandmothers, animals, dust and time passing by and contributing to the environment. 'Passing By' is a metaphor for those in the community who are nonchalant about the impact they may have on the community...those who destroy or negatively affect spaces but are indifferent about it. Onele has thoughts as to what leads to people feeling this way.

In the township, there are many social issues. For example, there are gangsters and youths who fight daily. There are ongoing wars that lead to people becoming disconnected from the community. Many in turn become apathetic, disillusioned and indifferent. Caring for the environment becomes their last priority.

However, Onele is hopeful and sees the beauty beneath the mess. He sees the potential that his township possesses and he believes in peace. To him, peace lies in interactions: with people, with spaces.



PHOTOGRAPHER PROFILES

Somnath Mukherjee

Project title: The Last Voyage

Varanasi, also known as Benaras or Banaras, is one of the oldest cities in India. A journey to Varanasi is of specific significance: dying here is said to liberate Hindus from the endless birth-death cycle – the repeated reincarnation in which they believe. Varanasi, formally known as Kashi, or 'City of Life', is a town where many people come to die.

This series of photographs focuses on Manikarnika Ghat, one of the oldest cremation ghats in Varanasi, and the cremations that happen there. In Hindu mythology, it is believed that the souls of people cremated here can depart to heaven and connect to God.

Somnath Mukherjee describes watching out over the ceremony: "I watched dead bodies swathed in brightly coloured cloth being carried through Varanasi's narrow alleyways and down to the river, where they were doused in the holy waters and then placed upon a pyre fed with wood and fuel."

People are denied entry into the ghat unless they hold a special connection to the person who has passed away, which makes photographing the ceremonies a difficult and distant task. During these burial rituals, locals continue with their daily tasks on the banks of the river, as the water brings life to the city of Varanasi. It shows a meeting point between life and death; death as a part of life.



PHOTOGRAPHER PROFILES

Siddharth Haobijam

Project title: The Jewel of India

Manipur is a land of mystic charm and beauty, encircled by nine low mountain ranges that form a natural fortress around the region. Manipur connects India to Myanmar and has become a cultural melting pot over the years. Some say the earliest settlers were people of Aryan origin, finding homes in and around Moirang. They were referred to as the 'Khalachai', which in southern Chinese dialect meant 'children of the wide lake'.

The Manipur society has produced great dance forms, which can be divided into two groups: the ancient dance forms such as the 'Thabal Chongba' and the 'Maibi Jagoi', and the modern one, called the Manipuri classical dance.

This modern dance centers on 'Krishna Bhakti', and is typically a celebration of the 'Radha-Krishna' relationship and is strictly religious.

When you see our "jagoi"(dance) being performed, you will notice that the eyes of the dancer are never lifted up. This restraint is very beautiful and typical to this style. Even the movements of the dancer are controlled. They look easy, graceful and fluid; there are no sharp edges to the dance. Yet, the dance is extremely vigorous, especially when performed by the male dancers. They play the drums and the large cymbals. The difference between the male and female dancers is very clear in Manipur. The female dancer is very poised and gentle while the male dancer is powerful and energetic.



PHOTOGRAPHER PROFILES

Terence Lee Ji Long

Project title: The Forgotten Ones

The passage of time is marked by the process of continual change

- Lee Kiyong

Elderly people across the world are often marginalised by society, and in extreme scenarios like this, abandoned entirely. These photographs were taken by Terence Lee, based in Singapore, and tell the story of one lady now living on the streets after her son and daughter left her. She is seventy-four years old, and makes a living on the streets by collecting cardboard boxes and selling them to a local recycling plant for 10-20 cents per kilogram.

Speaking to Lee, the lady expressed her concerns for her children who were struggling to support themselves in times of economic crisis, 'family is wealth' she believes, her two children are what she lives for. Through his photographs, Lee hopes to share knowledge of people 'forgotten' by society with a wider audience. He uses the genre of documentary photography to bare witness to people living on the periphery, and to bring them into our consciousness.



O
U
R
S
T
O
R
I
E
S

PHOTOGRAPHER PROFILES

Vanessa Terán

Project title: Shimba's Children

Vanessa Terán is from Quito in Ecuador, she began photography almost two years ago, with an interest in the power that comes with holding a camera. In 2011, Terán, undertook a photography course in her home city, before venturing to South Africa in 2012 to continue her photographic studies there.

In December 2011, Terán travelled to Kenya to volunteer in the "Ray of Hope" children's home in Shimba Hills, Mombasa. For six weeks, she built relationships with around fifteen children and teenagers and got to know their families and friends and the environment in which they lived. Some of them shared their stories openly, some of them remained hidden and with others she would play games and assist in their studies. Terán explains that she was naturally drawn to their honesty and through developing personal relationships with the children she was able to capture moments when her companions were not consciously sharing nor hiding, but just being. "I felt like these honest moments breached the separation between our differences, emphasizing our similarities; 'our essence of humanity'. In the end, we are all dynamic, sociable, sensitive, strong and vulnerable human beings," says Terán.



O
U
R
S
T
O
R
I
E
S