



EYE PHOTO
MAGAZINE

BY STEFAN CIMER

FEATURED PHOTOGRAPHER

#07

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SAINT
Bake

INTERVIEW WITH

GERRI McLAUGHLIN

STREET AND URBAN PHOTOGRAPHER,
SWITZERLAND



Our seventh featured interview is about a fantastic photographer, a former professional cook and later assistant of Cuban photographer Ismael Lorenzo. It is a very special honor, for me in particular, as I'm following his work for quite a while now! His photos reflect our everyday life but with a very certain and emphatic perception of the humanity.

Without further ado, please accompany us on our trip through Gerri McLaughlin's, captivating and stunning visual world.

Enjoy reading!

Yours truly

Stefan Cimer

Managing Editor

Gerri, I was looking forward to do this interview for quite a while, so I would like to start with saying thank you for taking your time and giving us the opportunity for having this interview.

Please tell us a little bit about yourself to begin with.

Thank you Stefan for inviting me. I'm originally from Glasgow but now living near Basel since 1999. I was a professional cook until 2009 and for the last 18 months I have worked for the Cuban photographer Ismael Lorenzo in his studio as his assistant.



What is street photography for you?

Street photography for me is a voyage of self-discovery, in the last three years I have seen different themes develop in my photos that I hadn't really planned to shoot. The camera tells the story so to speak. I learn a lot about people on the street and also what's important to me through the lens of my camera. Street photography for me is being present in the moment of The Beautiful Ordinary that is Life.



We Street 2015 - A Public Street Photography Book Project For You!

By **Steven Gonzalez, Willem Jonkers, Arek Rataj, Sandra Jonkers**

You Want To Be Published In A Street Photography Book?
We Street 2015

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- A maximum of three Photographs will be preselected
- Curated pre-selection of submissions by 4 curators
- 100 shots will be selected, max. 1 per photographer
- A HQ-book will be made publicly available for order
- This is a NON-profit initiative!

For more details please visit the Facebook group **We Street 2015**
or Willem JONKERS blog:

We Street 2015 - A Public Street Photography Book Project For You!

Could you share with us how you first became interested in photography in general?

My first girlfriend studied photography and through that I learned to be her model in the studio from time to time and it was also my first contact to guys like Kertesz and Cartier-Bresson

I had a small Ricoh which I used for travelling and I also had a Canon in the 90's but the cameras came and went as I did other things. It's only really since 2012 I got serious about taking pictures. I bought a second hand 5D and took a course with Ismael to learn to use it, from there I decided it would be Street Photography for me.



Gerri, I've browsed through your fantastic work and found a lot of street portraits among your other motifs. Would you say that street portraits characterize your work most?

It's certainly a big part of what I do, Basel is quite a small city so I am fairly visible on the street so I got to know quite a few people there too.

Sometimes I take a shot or two sometimes we just talk or share a coffee, many of the portraits were taken just by waiting for the person to look at me, I'm drawn to people who stand out a little from the crowd and sometimes people seem to look right at me when they see the camera!



What is it in your subjects that makes you want to capture them?

I find human beings fascinating and long before I had a DSLR I was an avid people watcher, on the tram, in the station, in shops, everywhere in fact. So I am drawn sometimes to those who seem a little detached from the flow of life or who are perhaps down on their luck. What interests me though is this; is their detachment really their own or a reflection of my own sense of strangeness of being so long away from home. This idea of home and exile is one of my personal themes. So I look for faces which speak to me and perhaps my own sense of loneliness. In the city I see so many people whose faces are like a book I would love to read from cover to cover but only have an instant to somehow capture that feeling. I love when I get home and see that maybe just maybe I caught something of that person's story!



How much does your equipment help you to execute your artistic vision and what kind of equipment are you using?

It's taken me the last two years just to get comfortable with the cameras I have, I can't claim to be the most technical of shooters but I realize more and more that a good grasp of the camera in hand allows me to do my thing as well as possible in any given moment. I have a Canon 5D with a 50mm, a 17-40mm and 24-105mm. I also have a Lumix GX7 with a 14-42 on it for more discreet practices! I have a hole in my heart the exact size of a FujiXT1 and when it's filled I think I will have everything I need:)



There are portrait photos in your gallery by which your subjects are looking straight into the camera. How much do you interact with your subjects and what kind of reactions do you get?

I tend not to talk too much with my subjects, if I ask them for the shot I just wait till they look straight down the lens and click, then afterwards we can talk a little if necessary. Some of the candids I just focused and waited for their eyes to meet mine! I get lucky too, I would love to be a whole lot braver this year and get right in close to my subjects. I've been fortunate not to have had too many bad reactions, sometimes people shout at me, I tend to smile and apologies with a gesture or a quiet word. I always remain polite and courteous and until now I have never had to delete any pictures.



You're capturing street photography almost in Black and White. I'm curious, is there any specific reason that led you to process the photos in Black and White?

The first photographs I remember were those small black and white family ones that everyone had and I always loved them. As a young man I came across the work of Weegee and his pictures really nailed my love of black and white. There's something about black and white for me that is very classic and reminds me of my childhood and the first exhibitions I saw, even the cinematography of great B&W films like Citizen Kane, Night of The Hunter, Touch of Evil etc. So it felt kind of natural to me to process in B&W. I may change as I develop as a photographer but for the moment B&W is where I want to be.



Among your works, would you name one as your favorite and why?

I took a picture of a street guy at the Bahnhof in Basel, his name was Marcel and he was the first person I ever asked for a photo, it was a big step for me as a relatively shy person. I was happy with the result and chatting with him I realized I had to overcome my fears if I want to do street photography!



Did you ever take a photograph which compromised your emotional balance in a deep way?

Yes and I would say more than once but one sticks in my mind and I called it "Third Day Rain" It rained solidly for three days and in those days I had many things to do in the city and I was feeling sorry for myself that I was getting wet, then I saw one of the homeless guys I know from the street, he was passed out exhausted in a bus shelter on top of his suitcase he always has with him.

I realized then how blessed I am in my life now. I got the shot off and left something for him to wake up to remembering how tough the street is for many.



Has your style of shooting changed since you first started?

Yeah for sure, learning how to optimize my camera for a start has helped me greatly, working for Ismael too has really helped, he very generous with his time if I have any questions. At first I think I just shot lots and lots of pictures now that's gone down a bit and I have slowed down a lot too. I feel more part of what I am doing and not so much of an newbie! As my themes develop I start to see series of shots growing. I still have a long way to go to be where I would like to be but this last year has seen my confidence grow a bit and perhaps the beginnings of a style appearing. I tend not to think too much when I am out with my camera, I try to work as cleanly and as intuitively as I can.



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iStreet Photography Exhibition, organized by Des BYRNE and Peter O DOHERTY

Dublin, from 14th to 27th August 2015



Photo by Seamus TRAVERS

The iStreet Photography Exhibition will take place in Sol Art Gallery Dawson Street Dublin from Friday 14th August till Thursday 27th August over two Weekend's, featuring the Street Photography work of 50 Photographers from Ireland and around the World from Professional to Amateur Photographers including this Years Irish Times Winners.

For more information, please visit the Facebook event page:

iStreet Photography Exhibition Dublin

Are there any photographer how took influence on your photographic work and style?

I love Weegee Bruce Gilden and Boogie in NYC, Daido Moriyama, I love Diane Arbus, Vivian Maier, Elliott Erwitt, Christina Garcia Rodero and the great Glasgow photographer Oscar Marzaroli, I'm in several Facebook groups where there are many great photographers like Mark Leslie, Naoki Iwao, Mike Fahy and Gabi Ben Avraham who inspire me daily to get out there and get working. My style I hope is not to derivative of anyone in particular:)) I'm like a sponge so there will be bits of some others in there!



What are some of the most important lessons you have learned from shooting on streets?

Be yourself, do your best on any given day, respect the people who cross your path and if you can someone a hand up, why not, you never know which way the street will take you. Stand up for yourself politely but firmly and remember that a smile will open doors that perhaps would have forever remained closed. Shooting on the street has awakened parts of me that I didn't know I had or had forgotten I had, I find it to be a deeply revealing occupation, there's no place to hide from yourself on the streets!



Are there any special projects you're working on currently which you would like to introduce here?

I'm just putting together a project called " Home" which will be a series of portraits of immigrant people here in Switzerland, some who have been here for many years, some who have just arrived, some who came as small children It's focus will be the idea of Home and what does that mean to us as human beings. It's one of my own personal recurring themes, having been away from my home in Scotland for 25 years. I am also putting the finishing touches to my website which should be up and running soon.



Gerri, thank you very much for taking your precious time and let us have your thoughts and views!

Please visit Gerri at Facebook: www.facebook.com/gerri.mclaughlin.3

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