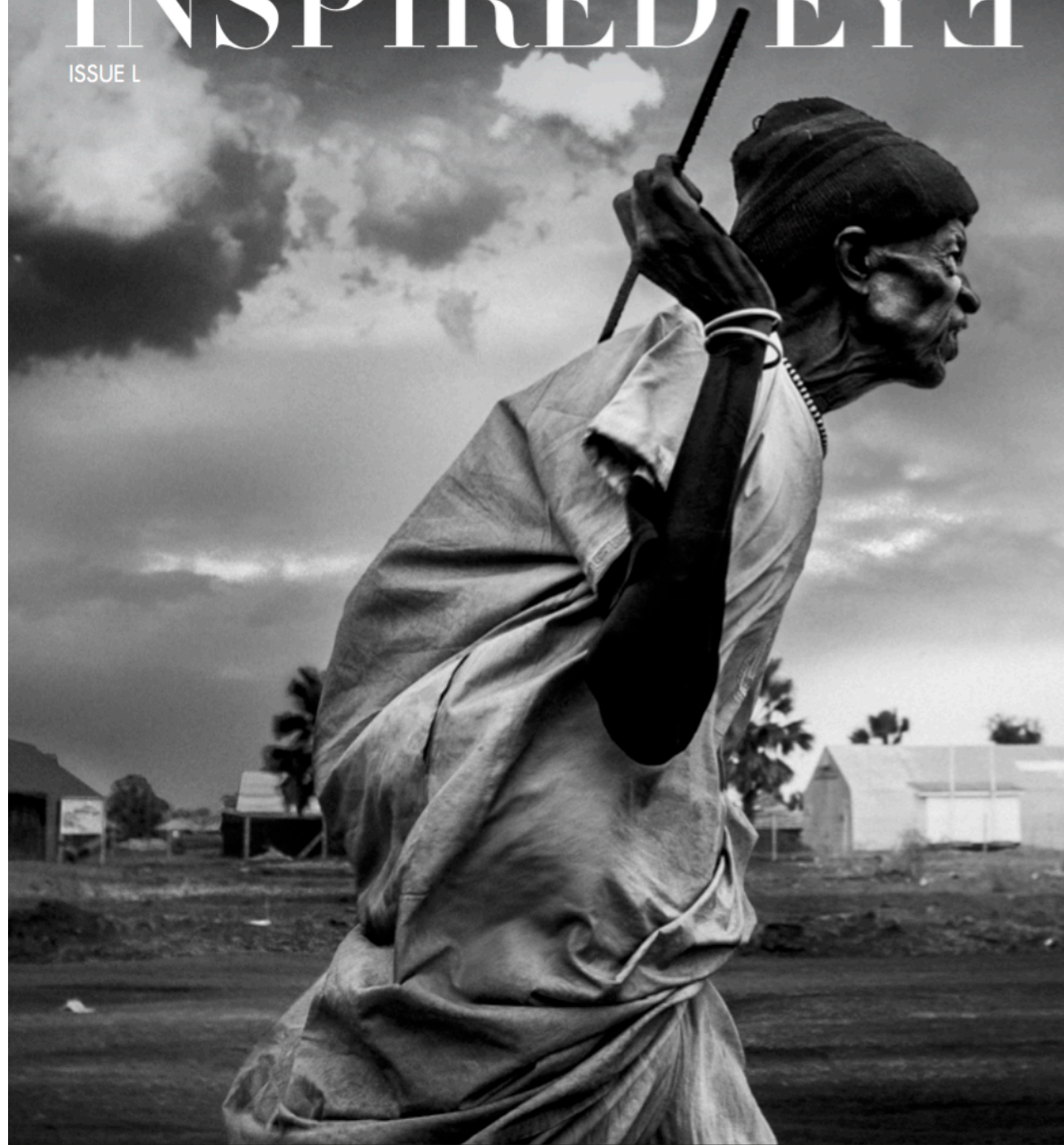


DEVELOPING THE PHOTOGRAPHER'S EYE, HEART AND MIND

# INSPIRED EYE

ISSUE I



TO INSPIRE AND TO BE INSPIRED BY ALL OF THE PHOTOGRAPHY COMMUNITY



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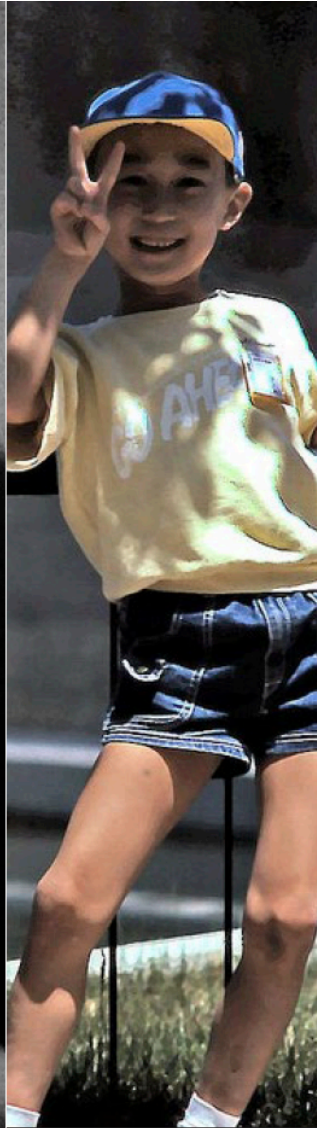
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INTERVIEW WITH

# ISABEL CORTHIER



***Please tell us something about you, your life and interest etc.***

Hi Don, thanks so much for asking me for an interview! I am honoured! Even though I am not in the first place a street photographer, I think once you're out on the streets, and you shoot 'strangers', you just became one for the time that you're out there. So I made a selection of pictures I took, while out on the streets. These streets are sometimes dirt roads in the middle of nowhere, so I take it as broad as my work field goes... I work in the field of photography for NGO's and documentary.

I am fascinated with people. Their behaviour, their looks, their beliefs. That's why I gave up my job as architect, to become a photographer. The more different a person is, the more interested I am in that discovery, the interaction, the expected and the unexpected. I love it to feel a connection, and to feel that we're all humans.

In general, I try to work with a lot of respect when I approach others for a photograph. I think the people feel that, and I mostly get easily access to photograph in many places and events.

***What inspired you to become a photographer?***

As I told you, I am fascinated by people, and I love aesthetics. Colors, lines, proportions,... it's something that can recall emotion to me. Since my parents wanted me to get a 'real' job, I became an architect and worked for



a few years designing, puzzling, making maquettes. I discovered the force of light. How shapes and spaces change with light that touches it. In the meantime I studied photography in the evenings. Never thought it was going to take an important place in my life. In my job there was something missing. I thought it was the Belgian way of doing it. So I went abroad, to France, then to Ireland.

I felt that the lines and shapes alone were not enough to feed my desire for harmony. I also wanted to feel harmony with the people that surrounded me. So I decided to give up architecture and bought myself one of the first Fujifilm Instax cameras. I started selling portraits of people in the streets and bars of Dublin. It became a very successful little independent business. I made people instantly happy and had an excuse for sometimes intriguing encounters. I discovered the power of photography. Yes, I had found my mission!

***What age are you and at what age did you start your journey as a photographer?***

40 y, I started evening school when I was 25. Never thought I would make a living with it. My professional journey started in a photo studio in Antwerp. I didn't have my degree in photography yet, but I tried to get a job in a brand new cool photo studio. I had to go back several times, and finally the guy accepted to give me a job! Yes! I got started. After some time, I became an independent photographer, and did my first shoots with a camera I had











borrowed. I didn't have enough money to buy one yet.

***Would you mind sharing some of the things you feel helped you along the way with your photography, (lessons, workshops, books etc)....and also some of the things that may have hindered***

***you that you overcame on this journey?***

I studied photography for 4 years, in the evenings after my work day. But I learned the most in the field, being experimental, curious and by making lots mistakes. I joined some workshops, where I learned the most from colleagues, the exchanges, the questioning, thinking together on photography. Nowadays

information is much easier to access through online courses. Creative Live has some great courses, covering a wide range of subjects. They even focus on storytelling and photojournalism. Courses I had never seen before. Before courses were mainly focussed on technique, not content or approach. The learning platforms have improved a lot in the last years. What have hindered me is the fact that I

wanted to generate my income on photography, so I accepted too many jobs that weren't really interesting. I wish I could have been more sceptical, and choose a project to investigate deeply, with no money pressure. I think I would have developed my skills faster and differently than I did now.

***Do you feel photography enhances your life. If so, how?***

Photography IS my life. Even without a camera, in my head, presence somewhere, I'm still taking pictures wherever I go. I think I live quite intensely, and a camera is even enhancing that more. A camera often gives me the excuse to explore just a bit further than I would without the camera.

***If we are speaking specifically of photographers, which***

***are the ones of the past and present do you admire?***

In the beginning I used to be a very big fan of the subtle b&w photography of Sebastiao Salgado, and the colourful work of Steve McCurry, together with photographers like Dominic Nahr, Brent Stirton, Cédric Gerbeyah... and I was very interested in the conceptual work of Sophie









Calle and how she approaches intimacy, and oh, Nan Goldin and the atmosphere in her pictures... I learned about the work of Harry Gruyaert, Paolo Pellegrin, Jacob Aue Sobol, Alex Webb. Nowadays I see a lot of good work from photographers around the world on Instagram.

I just discovered the amazing work of Jan Grarup. He has a very sensitive approach to harsh subjects. There are some amazing female photographers

out there. Stephanie Sinclair, Lynsey Addario, Newsha Tavakolian, Robin de Puy.... I think I cannot stop :-)

***What purpose does photography serve for you?***

For me it is a reason to get in touch with people, to observe humanity, to get closer to understanding life and other cultures, to create and capture harmony.

***Do you do photography for hire or as an art form?***

It's a combination. I do it for my passion, as my main income, to give a voice to people, to make the world a better place, sometimes my work is used for fundraising, or the stories are shared in magazines or for the communication purpose of an NGO.

***What do you do for work and how does photography fit into that?***

I am a freelance photographer, full time.

***What Genre' of photography are you most comfortable working in?***

I love to work with very 'normal' people, especially from

other cultures. So I mean no supermodels, no famous people, like politicians, actors...

I like people who are themselves, who wear no masks. It makes me a richer person to enter a house of a person I meet and see how one's living, and have a very intimate insight in their lives. Often people have a harder live than the average European or US citizen. I like to show respect, and the moment of recognition that we are actually the same, makes me intensely happy.

***When you work, are you working on different series or just finding photos that fit the way you feel at the moment?***

I usually work for NGO, and in my free time, I make reportages for my own stories. I usually work with one purpose at the time.