

HÅKAN STRAND SHORT STORIES

The much cited saying “The journey is the reward” proves true in the case of the Swede Håkan Strand. A few years ago, the photographer – who “normally” dedicates his time to meticulously set up and technically complex landscape photography – started to take spontaneous pictures of his surroundings on his travels. The result is a series of photographic “Short Stories” from around the world that show that there are photo motifs everywhere and at all times with the potential of telling a powerful story.

There is no concept behind Håkan Strand’s “Short Stories”, no overriding plan or even a philosophical idea. He himself describes the origins of his works as a mix of “watchfulness, spontaneity and playfulness”. These pictures celebrate the moment and mirror the photographer’s sensitivity. Despite the different worlds they stem from, the pictures display a common melancholic, pensive mood. There are moments of loneliness, for example in the picture of the man on the jetty who, like the signpost next to him, is merely visible as a silhouette, in silent harmony with his surroundings, looking out into the distance. Or take the ensemble of New York skyscrapers, cool and

forbidding, which is animated by the fluttering flight of a single bird. Strand has even captured mourning, distanced, yet emphatic, in a minimalist silhouette composition: during a soldier’s burial, a group of comrades bow their heads in grief and respect. In “The Crossroad”, Håkan Strand has captured an elderly woman in a misty graveyard next to a gigantic cross. Here he is, once again, the outside observer of a quiet moment. Strand leaves much room for interpretation, poses riddles and provokes the viewers to imagine stories. We talked to the photographer about the pictures he has been taking with growing enthusiasm over the past few years on top of his regular work.



Birdman. Sweden, 2012



Black Bird.
New York City,
USA. 2008

You are a passionate landscape photographer who concentrates on atmospheric motifs in nature and in the urban environment. In your series "Short Stories", you are spontaneously capturing street scenes. What is your idea behind these pictures?

That this series came about is pure coincidence. During my regular work, I am often out on the streets to get from A to B. Then, all of a sudden, these photo opportunities just started "jumping out at me". At first, I had no concrete idea. It was just fun to take these pictures. But once I had taken more and more

pictures of this kind, I started to perceive my surroundings between photo locations more attentively. Today, I'm always on the lookout for situations that can go into my collection of photographic short stories.

Composition is essential to your work. What, in terms of composition, is the greatest difference between your landscape photography and your "Short Stories" series?

With my landscape photographs, I need to plan ahead meticulously in terms of composition, and I put a lot of work into every individual shot. It's the comple-



Sanctuary.
Sweden 2014

te opposite with my "Short Stories". Here, I play – so to speak – "by ear".

Which equipment did you use and how did you process your images?

For this series, I used all kinds of equipment, but mainly my Hasselblad medium format cameras and an Olympus OM-10 compact camera with Tri-X 400 and Kodak T-Max 100 films. I develop the negatives myself in my darkroom and then scan the negatives. I also used a Sony A99 digital camera and processed the pictures in Lightroom.

All pictures in this series have been printed on textile fibre papers.

You shoot your photos in many different places around the world. What impact does travel have on your photographic work?

I find it most inspiring to travel and to discover new places. The fact that I travel alone also means that I can concentrate 100 per cent on photographing. Nobody interrupts or disturbs me. After many, many years of working in stressful jobs, this is a luxury I enjoy and cherish.



How much artistic freedom do you, as a professional fine art photographer, have?

Do you ever think of selling your pictures while you take them?

I have 100 per cent artistic freedom! I photograph everything I want to and let no one influence me in any way. Many people find that strange. But I really do not think about whether something will sell or not – especially when I'm doing fine art photography which I display on my website.

You are a self-taught photographer, who has managed to turn his passion into a living. What advice would you give people, who want to start a career as photographer?

Work hard and never give up! And find a second job, because it is too risky and too unpredictable to merely rely on sales by art galleries. I regularly take on commercial assignments – they give me the necessary financial security and the total freedom I need for my fine art photography.

Do you have any projects in mind you would like to realise in the future?

Indeed I do. I am currently searching for a gallery that will showcase my work in Germany. I would love to present my work to a German audience. Another dream is to publish a coffee-table book with my pictures.

Interview: Patrick Brakowsky

Based on
a True Story.
Italy 2013

Amish Women.
Cape May –
Lewes Ferry,
New Jersey,
USA. 2008





The Crossroad, Sweden 2009



A Soldier's Funeral. Arlington National Cemetery, Virginia, USA. 2008

Håkan Strand

...is an award winning Fine Art Photographer based in Stockholm, Sweden. He is represented in galleries around the world and widely published all over the globe. His fine art photography prints are held in private and corporate collections, including the Swedish embassy in India. He has received several international awards for his photographic work (*Prix De La Photographie, International Photography Awards, Black & White Spider Awards* among others).
| www.strand-photo.com

