

STANDARD

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INSIDE: POETRY FOR DRINKERS • THE PHOTOGRAPHIC EYE
TIE-DYE TECHNIQUES • THE ARCHITECTURE OF SUMET JUMSAI



JOHN DORNBIERER

ASIATISCHE IMPRESSIONEN
FOTOAUSSTELLUNG
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Nepal: Villager

John Dornbierer: A Profile

I walked one early morning through a Nepali village... and, I saw, through a small window, the head of an old man in a shaft of light.

Realizing it would make a good picture, I set the camera, opened the door, rushed in, and snapped the picture.

"Then of course I apologized. But I had the picture."

"One really has to use, perhaps, even impolite techniques in order to get what one wants."

"Some rude behavior or something one will forget, but a picture, - ah!, it's something that lasts."

John Dornbierer, Swiss photographer.

Trying to explain his pictures - with words that dribble out in twos and threes.

Doubly difficult. English is not his mother tongue. And photography is basically a vision, not a verb.

Talking about photography from the point of view of techniques is less difficult, but the words don't do him justice.

"How do I take pictures?..."

Sentences left suspended in mid-air, dangling, while he fishes for a noun.

"I am like a..."

Pauses.

Turns a phrase over in his mind like a merchant turns an orange in his hand, looking for flaws, inspecting it for its beauty before he sets it in the front row as an advertisement for the rest of his oranges. And himself.

"...bee."

Pause.

"I'm going around just observing. If I see something, then I take a picture."

(cont'd next page)



Alaska: Abstract ice



Indonesia: Outrigger



the eye of a master photographer

By A.A. Maytree



Canada: Trans-Canada highway

How ridiculously simple it all seems, the way he describes it. Couldn't we do it? It's easy, no? No.

The difference is in the eye. Photographically, you and I are half-blind.

We just don't see half the things that he sees.

If you don't believe me, take a good look at the following photographs.

One picture is worth a thousand of his words. But let him tell it himself:

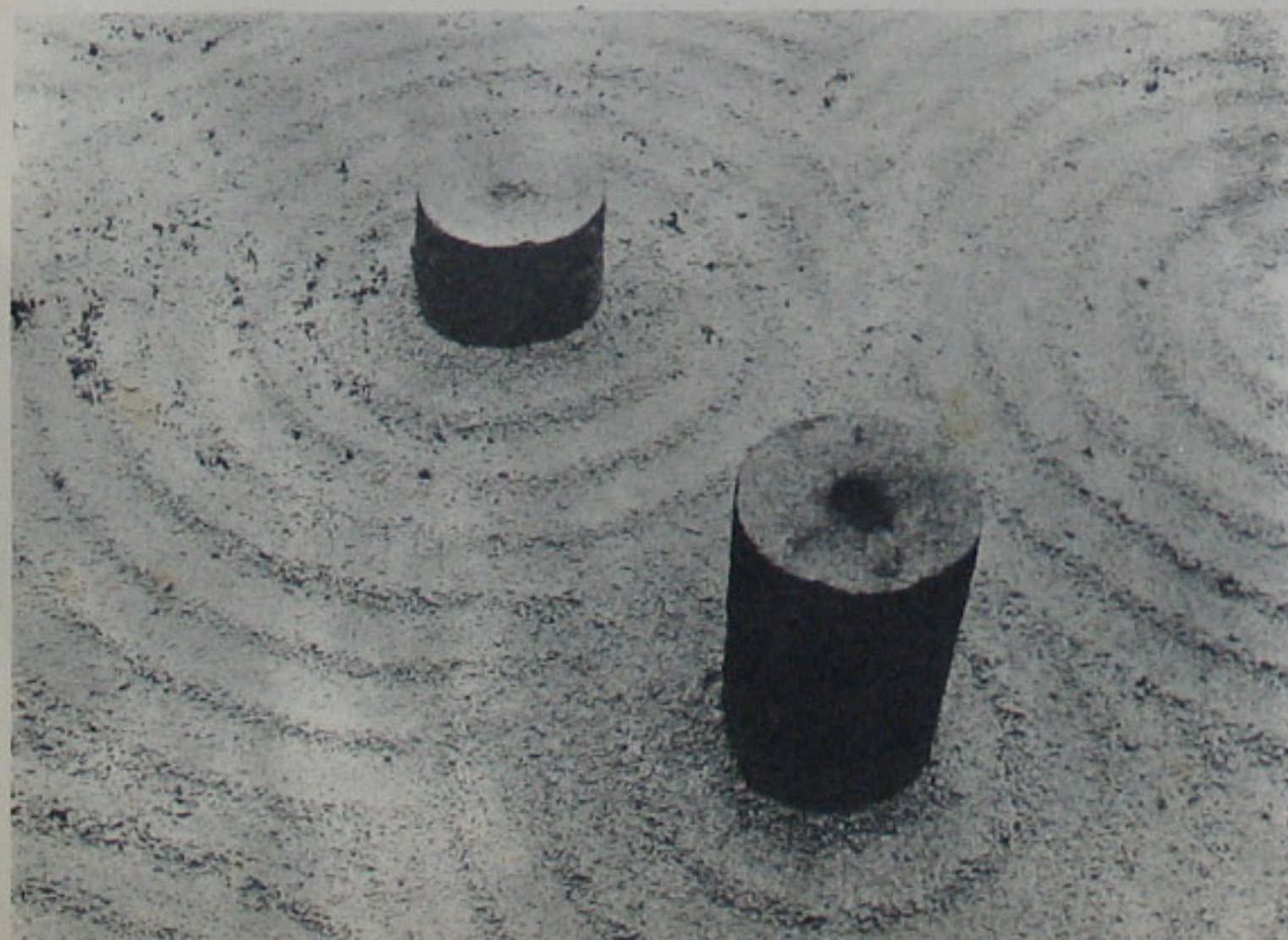
I ALWAYS WANTED TO BECOME AN ARCHITECT. I NEVER THOUGHT I'D DO ANYTHING ELSE.

But when I got to high school I realized I wanted to see the world. So I looked for a job that would allow me to travel. Finally I thought photography would do best. That's

why I became a photographer.

BASICALLY I DIVIDE PHOTOGRAPHY INTO THREE PARTS - DOCUMENTARY, HUMAN INTEREST, AND ABSTRACT.

(On documentary photography): I mean, anyone can do it. Like pictures for calendars, and such. IT DOESN'T TAKE MUCH TALENT, OR EVEN IMAGINATION, REALLY.



Japan: Kyoto garden

(On human interest photography): SPEED IS ALL IMPORTANT. In human interest photography you must be very observant and extremely quick in realizing what you see. I have more good pictures that I missed than I took. Even now I can see them in my mind - but I was perhaps two, three seconds late.

(On the decisive moment): IF A PERSON NOTICES HE IS BEING PHOTOGRAPHED, IN THIS VERY BRIEF MOMENT OF CONFRONTATION HE HAS NOT YET MADE UP HIS MIND HOW TO REACT. This may last only a few seconds. And it is in this moment that I must shoot the picture.

(On freezing a human condition): From India I have one picture of a beggar. When I saw him I knew, THIS IS INDIA. THIS IS THE PHILOSOPHY OF AN INDIAN BEGGAR. Although he is a beggar he walks with the pride of an aristocrat, showing that he is above matter.

This picture can speak for all Indian beggars, of which there are many millions. You see, I was freezing a human condition.

(On abstract photography): ABSTRACT PHOTOGRAPHY, WHERE YOU WORK IN SYMBOLS, THIS IS THE MOST ARTISTICALLY DEMANDING OF ALL TYPES OF PHOTOGRAPHY.

(Discovering abstract photography): I FIRST CAME TO ABSTRACT PHOTOGRAPHY THROUGH HAIKU POETRY. Japanese 17 syllable poems. When I was in Japan I was intrigued by the beauty, the conciseness of Haiku poetry. To express an idea in so concise a form! It was then that I started to take abstract pictures.

(Interpreting abstract photography): I am not wanting to give any specific idea. I leave it open to the viewer. And that's the beauty of Haiku poetry too. It is "much" the same as smoking hash-everybody gets high on his own terms.

(The search for simplicity): I am intrigued by the essence of anything. For instance, the essence of a tree can be bare branches, cutting down things to the bare essentials. Nothing to distract. That is why I work very much in high contrast pictures.

I want to cut down everything to light and shade. White and black.

(On tools): I use Nikon cameras because I need dependable cameras which can stand rough treatment. But, on the whole, cameras are not really important. What is important is the idea one gets across with his tool, the camera. I'd rather have a picture taken with an inferior camera perhaps, and bad film, development, everything, but one in which you can feel the mood of the picture.



Thailand: Burned tree

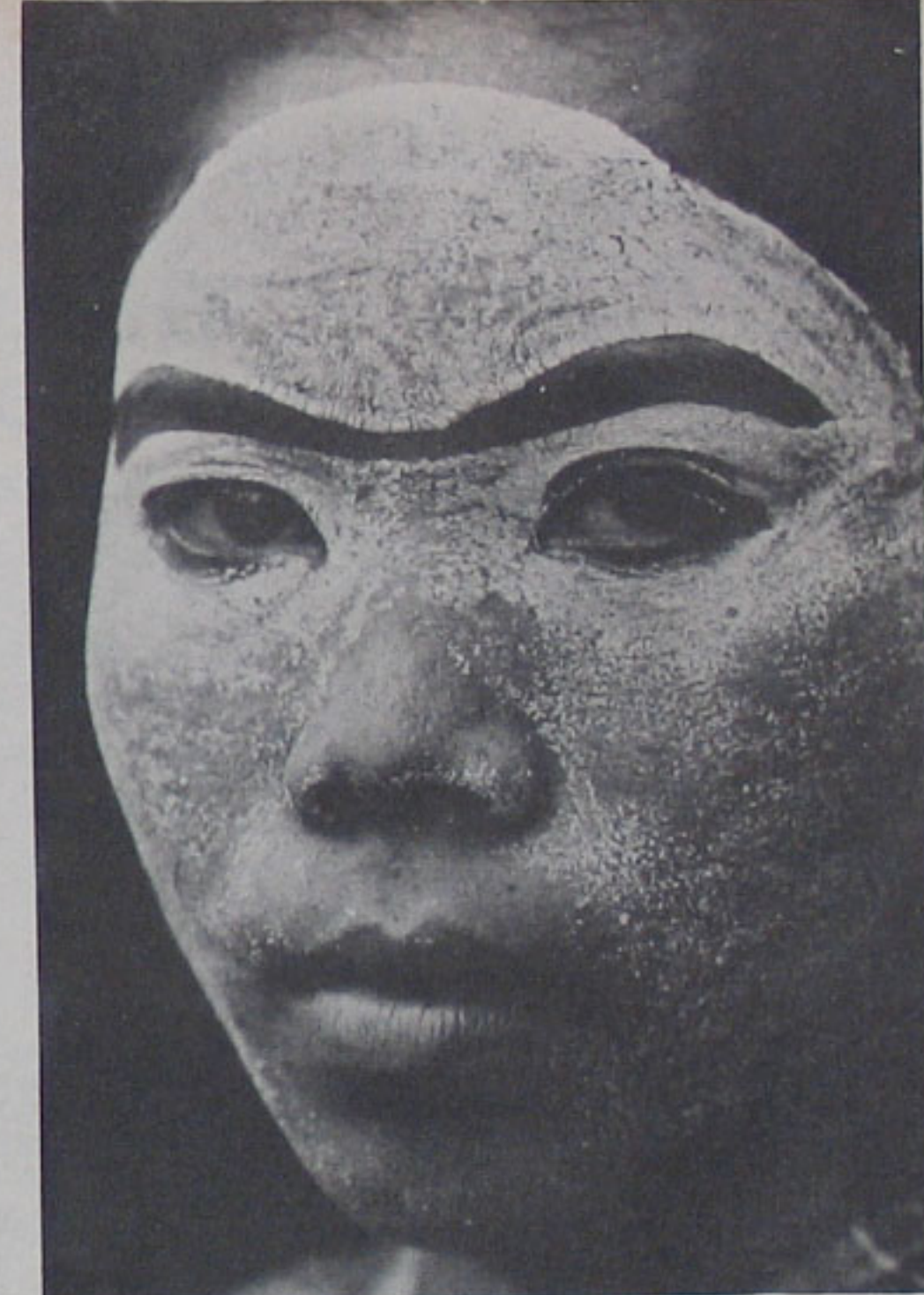
(On technique): In the process of striving to get a technically good picture, sometimes photographers miss the inspired moment which calls for quick action. I say forget about exposure, everything - just snap the picture, press the button. Never mind if it is over or underexposed. The important thing is, if you fumble for aperture, everything else, you lose the picture; whereas if you don't give a damn, just shoot the picture, and look for the aperture afterwards. There is not a second to lose.

(Favorite photographer): My favorite photographer is Bischof, a Swiss photographer. He was one of the greatest human interest photographers in the world. He made fantastic pictures of Japan.

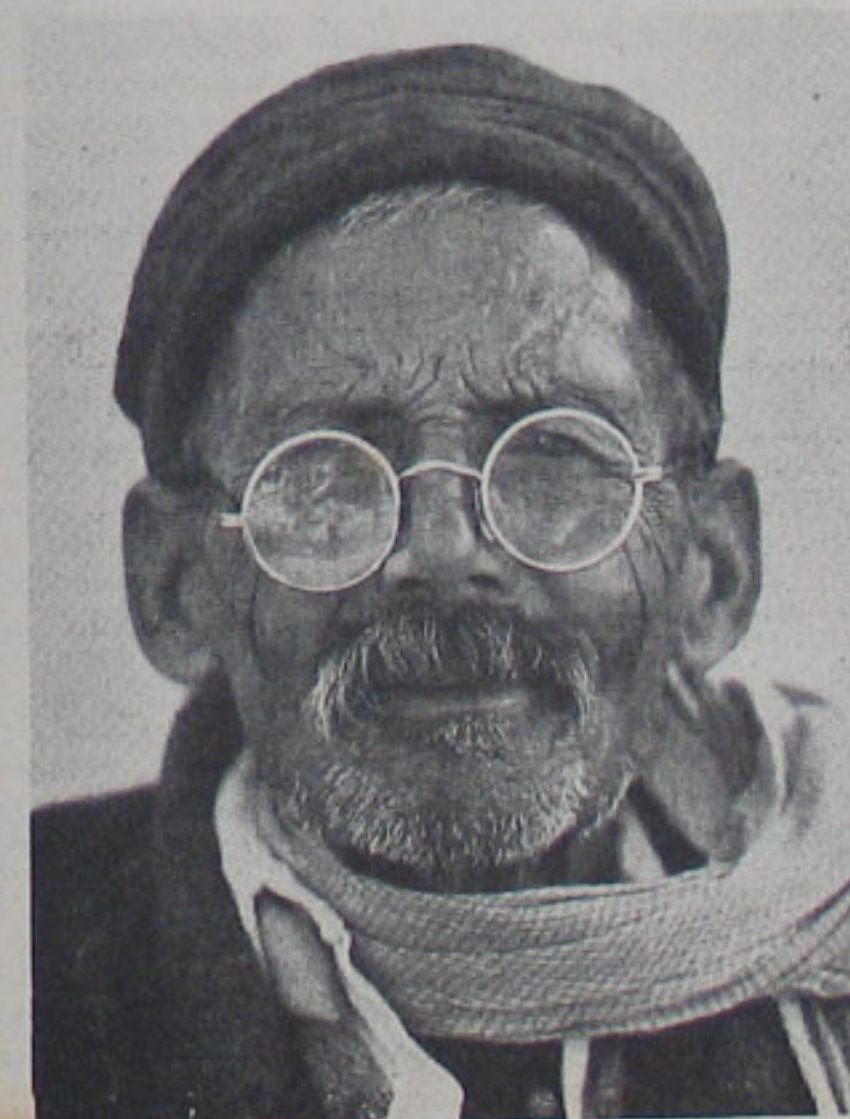
That's the beauty of Bischof, even if you have never been to Japan, and know nothing of Japan, you can understand Japan by looking at his pictures.

That's human interest photography at its very best.

(Favorite places): My favorite places in the world? In July it has to be Bali. All the festivals are in



Philippines: Sulu girl



July. It is a paradise. Of course, Kyoto in April, for the cherry blossoms and the atmosphere at that time. In October, in autumn, it's Massachusetts or Vermont, with its fantastic landscapes of red maples, and piles of orange pumpkins and the white farmhouses. It's New England in autumn.

And Ethiopia has some of the most beautiful, most bizarre landscapes in the world. Sometimes you don't know - are you looking at mountains or a painting by Salvador Dali?

And there's Afghanistan and Nepal, the mountains....

(Philosophy of life): It is a basic theme of my life so far - never to be committed until I find it really worthwhile hanging on to something. And I haven't yet. That explains my travelling so far. I'm still open to everything.

Once one is committed, one closes himself to so many other things.

Later on I may not be able to afford it anymore, this not being committed. But who knows, once I've found my life I might be even more creative! •