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July/August 2007

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Photo by Jeff Miller

An interview with Sean Perry: Photographer

www.SeanPerry.com
www.TransitoryBook.com

AOD:

There is something intriguing and mystifying about your new book *Transitory – The Abstract*. Beautifully crafted yet the photography jumps out at you. How were you able to capture such crisp, vivid images that resonate a quiet and unfamiliar beauty?

SEAN PERRY:

Thank you...I want to communicate the stillness and power of these places, their grace. I really do believe we leave behind a resonance in the things and objects we create, echoes of our intention and energy.

When I'm making images I'll spend time and look for what I can start to remove.. what is unnecessary. I try to find a singularity where one more abstraction would collapse the whole. When the images are successful, what remains is the moment you remember something you knew...a small passageway between.



Sentinel v.2

AOD:

When capturing images you only use the traditional (non-digital) method of photography. What is it about the process of the darkroom you enjoy most? Do you feel photographers should first learn how to expose film before going the digital route?

SEAN PERRY:

I love the time alone I spend in the darkroom, both for the discipline and craft and also for the time it allows me to work in a physical way - with my hands, finishing the day tired and dirty. I am so thankful for the time to be mentally *still*. With that said I usually print @ 120 decibels and just rock.

My view about digital capture and process is a photographer should reach for tools that allow them to express themselves in a direct, potent way. Working in analog or digital mediums are equally creative, sharing benefits and limitations at each end and core relationships in the middle. I think it's wise to be savvy in both languages.

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For me, having an analog captured negative is the purest way to express my images...I can't take a digital file into the darkroom and the animate nature of chemistry and silver is where the life of my images begin. I use digital tools...extensively for my website (www.seanperry.com), the book's website (www.transitorybook.com), promotionals like postcards - it is a valuable medium for me.



Sea of Tranquility

AOD:

The titles of your work are exemplary. Each title really helps you understand the emotion behind each of the themes – electricity, shadow, and solidity – in your book. How did you come up with the title and themes of your book? What inspired you?

SEAN PERRY:

My titles are clues as to what is beneath, the undercurrent of where the image begins. In reality they happen last, but when it's right I wonder how it could be called anything else. I think of them akin to finding the lyrics of a favorite song.

A theme throughout this body of work is a metaphor about communication and the small epiphanies where understanding blooms.. that moment is the essence of *Transitory*. Seeing how light reveals a sentience to structures and architecture inspired me to make pictures about that phenomena.

I am also inspired by the opportunity to be a participant with my collaborators; Cloverleaf Press and Jace Graf who is the book's designer and master craftsman, has given me a beautiful stage to present the work. I make the platinum prints with Chris McCaw (www.chrismccaw.com), whose new "Sunburn" series is just gorgeous. My websites and multimedia is developed by Tim Harold, who contributes a sounding-board and many of the titles. Mary Virginia Swanson (www.myswanson.com) has been irreplaceable in helping me develop and evolve a clear voice for the work and identify new audiences.



Amelioration

AOD:

Your closest friend and mentor, John Christensen, who is a sculptor in Austin, Texas, said your work says, "Let me show you something you may have missed". That statement perfectly describes your style and treatment of each subject you photograph. How has he helped you develop your work over the years? How do you digest and reconsider an image? When do you know when it's finished?

SEAN PERRY:

John (www.christensen-oko.com) is a force. Unmercifully honest and he possesses the kind of stamina I aspire to. I'm motivated by how his work contains such an absolute; as if what he has made has existed all along.. Observing his process has allowed me insight into building my own path and discovery. There are a handful of his expressions I can't forget that reveal his influence such as "a mutual exchange", "I make things because I need to see them", and from his artist statement, "Physical works - first felt, later thought - that claim their own place, that breathe, that have a specific posture."

It's hard to see your own work at first...it sometimes takes years to gain insight to what was really going on inside of you when it was made. I learned that from John...

I don't print images right away, I try to live with them for a while.. listening to what might or might not be there. I believe something is finished when I can look at it and feel the only way to make this better or more potent is for me to get older - I've left nothing behind that wasn't my best effort. In your guts you know when you cheat.



Revelation

AOD:

Simplistic images are never easy to translate onto film nor are they ever simple to capture. How long does it take you to come up with an idea? Are you more structured and organized when you work or do you allow your emotions to guide you to your next subject?

SEAN PERRY:

I don't feel I create things in so much as I compress experiences and atmosphere that are greater than I can say, into a small container you can see. I want to make images that are cinematic and viscerally felt and practice that in the simplest way.

When I make a successful image it is so much better than ANY fully preconceived idea I would have. I find things and places that I can feel, spend time to get at what is the purest essence of it, then get out of the way and let the image reveal itself.

I like to work within series and themes.. as they develop it becomes easier to identify which parts of the story need to be refined. Outside looking in I'm fairly organized - inside looking out, I'm working through each step, leaving a little room to be surprised. What guides me is the belief that as I evolve as a person, new ideas and work will reveal itself to teach me. I trust everything I need to know is in the next photograph I have to make.



The Sentinels





For more information about Sean Perry visit:

www.SeanPerry.com
www.TransitoryBook.com

Transitory – The Abstract is available directly from the publisher and photo-eye books.

Cloverleaf Press
512.494.9596
1906 Miriam Avenue
Austin, TX 78722

photo-eye Bookstore
800.227.6941
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Santa Fe, NM 87501

Prints are available through the gallery.

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