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The SUMMER
and travel time

Months come and go. I should have delivered my editorial quite some time ago. The only reason I have not been fired for not delivering is that my co-workers treat me with a lot of kindness and understanding.

There has been a combination of a lot of travel, the World Cup, and writer's block. These reasons, or excuses shall I say, combined with an overload of social activities seem to be sufficient to look upon my feelings of guilt -for not delivering- with some degree of complacency.

After all, I was thinking of all of you all the time, and preparing what I hope will be some ideas to share with you.

In the meantime (while I have been wandering all over the world) our staff here in ZoneZero has continued to produce some wonderful new exhibitions. Plus we have in the pipeline one year's worth of material you will really come to appreciate as the year progresses. In other words, I have been the only one around here that has been somewhat laggard.

You should know that when I travel, taking pictures of all that happens to me is part of the fun of just being where I'm at. The categories into which the images I made during the trip end up in my archive are one or more of the following: formal portraits, pictures of friends, landscapes, social commentary, street photography, autobiographical, travel images, etc.

It's not accurate to imagine that one just takes one style of imagery when traveling. I for instance take my camera (or cameras) everywhere I go, and I take pictures of everything that I come across. That way I end up with an array of imagery that is very diverse in nature as mentioned above.

One of the main issues that come up in the process of working like this is what camera should I take with me. You will probably be surprised to read, that my decisions are centered mainly on the weight of what I have to carry around all day.

I suppose most photographers belong to the "back ache" club, it seems that in man's evolutionary process, carrying around a lot of weight hanging either from your neck or one of your shoulders was not contemplated in the original design. We therefore end up with a lot of pain around our lumbar region as a result of carrying a lot of weight around all the time. So size as it relates to weight does matter.

However, technological advances have come to our aid in a very meaningful manner in dealing with weight issues. Cameras that are smaller and more powerful than ever before are making themselves present in direct competition with the heavy weights. Consider the most recent version of the Casio camera

(remember the Casio watches and calculators? Casio knows how to make small things) the model EX-Z1000, that has no less than 10.1 megapixels, and is incredibly fast.

This is an ideal camera to have, for most images of an informal nature. Don't interpret this as being dismissive of such a model because of its harmless appearance; you can get some astounding quality files that can be enlarged considerably. You can carry such a camera in your pocket at all times. The other day I made a portrait of a friend of mine, a book designer, who compared the quality of the image, with those he has done himself with a Hasselblad.

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I would of course, not recommend this small camera for all occasions, as having a SLR with various lenses is a very important tool to have for specific work -notwithstanding your backache- when either more luminous lenses or wide or long shots are required, so when that sort of photography comes up where you are going to take specific images, you can also include your walking distance in the decision of how much weight to take along.

Now I have also found an additional side effect of using this small Casio camera, almost no one takes you seriously. That is both a good and bad thing. If you are ego driven, and need to be acknowledged for your presence as a serious photographer, forget it, this is not your camera. On the other hand, if you feel secure enough about who you are without the flash of the high-end camera, you will be astonished in how many places you will have access to, which are usually "off-limits" to those big pro cameras.

An additional set of recommendations, which took me a long time and many mistakes later to learn how to get them right. You should consider backing up all your files onto DVDs in a very disciplined manner every day. Fortunately today you can purchase recordable DVDs in most parts of the world. Make TWO copies and place them in separate bags, you never know when traveling what can happen to your luggage. It can get lost, stolen, and or mauled by some conveyor belt system gone amuck.

If you like to start working on files as you travel, as I do, always save your newest version next to the original one with a consecutive number, never in stead of the original version.

And beware of downsizing a picture in order to send it to someone by email, and then unwittingly saving the low-res file on top of the original file. Once you have done that, your high-res file is lost forever. Never underestimate the amount of mistakes one is liable of making as one travels. The worst thing is that it usually happens to files you really liked, reason why you wanted to share the images in the first place.

Some of the best memory cards for your camera can still lose the pictures it has stored from your shoot, if you disconnect your camera from the computer in an inappropriate manner. In reality what gets lost are not all the files but the directory which gives you access to all your images. Those pictures can still be retrieved if you are careful not to save any further information on to the memory card. **There are applications such as Image Rescue from Lexar, that come with your memory card.** I have used it very successfully on two occasions when I had made some very unfortunate errors, such as starting to download files to the computer from a camera that did not have sufficient battery life to last throughout the process.

The image on the cover came from two images taken while traveling. The little girl is from Bangladesh, it belongs to what could be considered as a street photograph. The background came from a visit to The Prado Museum in Madrid, it's a painting by Peter Paul Rubens of Saturn devouring his children. I took it as a record of something I had seen that impressed me very much.

I did not shoot either one of them thinking at the time that I would combine them later. This idea emerged in going through the images on the monitor of my computer. However, being compelled to bring them together was probably at an unconscious level because there was a connection in my mind. I could of course elaborate a whole essay of what associations I made, but these would be after the fact, and as such probably intellectually quite suspect. I believe we can leave unconscious decisions just for what they are, without trying to justify everything.

The wonderful experience of being able today to make such images through digital technology has opened an entire array of new possibilities to create pictures. What used to be seen as just "travel pictures" have taken on substantial new possibilities. Enjoy your summer.

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