You Could Hear a Pin Drop | Afterword, 20 years later

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When Pedro Meyer first showed *I Photograph to Remember* at the Seybold Digital World Conference in Beverly Hills in 1991 we had a very different relationship with computers than we do today. Many of us encountered computers at work and in the arcade, but no one walked around with smartphones, tablets or netbooks mediating the whole of our waking lives. Computers didn't deliver movies, photos, or even music; they weren't matchmakers or the mechanism for staying in touch with far-flung grandchildren or lovers.

The audience of five hundred, almost entirely male senior executives in the electronics and media industries had never really seen anything on a computer screen with powerful emotional content. So when the lights went down and people heard Pedro Meyer's deep beautiful voice come out of the darkness, saying *"Let me introduce you to my parents"* as the screen showed a series of richly layered black and white images of his mother and father, people were a bit stunned. This was not the usual fare at a digital technology conference. And then on frame five when Manuel Rocha Iturbide's haunting score starts up accompanying a tender and romantic kiss everyone in the room realized they were in uncharted territory. A computer was being used to express a broad range of very complex and deep emotional feelings.

Pedro's parents had been ambivalent about him being a professional photographer, pushing him hard to be the very successful business man that he was in his early middle years. But when Pedro's father became sick, in a moment of personal bravery and artistic genius Pedro asked permission to take pictures of his parents. The result was ninety photographs which show the arc of life from birth to the inevitable end which both parents confront with exceptional grace and elegance.

In one key scene, just after his father is diagnosed with cancer, Pedro asks whether he can take some photos and his father asks *"What do you want me to do."* Pedro turns the question back and asks *"Well what do YOU want to do"* His father says he wants to fly and Pedro says, *"Well then, fly"* whereupon his father gets on his knees on the living room couch and flaps his hands and arms like wings. It's a remarkable moment of trust, love and transformation as father and son give each other permission to play new roles in their relationship and their respective lives.

Although only thirty minutes long ***I Photograph to Remember*** takes us on a journey through

the intersecting dramatic arcs that comprise our human existence, especially the joy and sadness of so much of our interaction with the ones we love. Pedro's parents die at the end of *I Photograph to Remember*, but they teach the living what it means to live passionately and to face the inevitable with an open heart.

At several points in the development of the piece we showed versions to various groups consisting of visitors and staff at Voyager to get their reaction. The feedback was crucial in helping to form the finished piece, but it was also clear that the piece was having a deep impact on everyone who saw it. We were mostly a young group with little death in our personal lives. IPTR became for many of us a valuable manual giving us lessons that we would one day need to confront the inevitable decline of our family, our loved ones and ourselves.

So, you could hear a pin drop in that Hollywood Conference hall. As people walked out at the end there was an unusual hush in the room... business wasn't returning immediately to normal. People were processing something new. No longer simply a productivity tool or game engine, the computer going forward would be at the center of the most deeply personal experiences of our lives. Many executives who were at that meeting told us later that IPTR had moved them to appreciate the importance of their families in ways and to an extent they hadn't before. Many of them said they changed their plans that weekend and went home to visit parents or children.

A few months ago a famous Silicon Valley CEO said to me:

Written by Bob Stein

"Remember when you presented Pedro Meyer's I Photograph to Remember

for the first time. That was really a turning point for all of us.

It really changed our understanding of what computing could be about."

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