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Pro of the Week **LOOKING TOWARDS THE NEXT IMAGE**

by Mosè Franchi

We've been active in the photography industry for quite some time now. We've seen how a photograph can become a departure instead of just a destination. This is especially evident with our photographer of the week, **Dario D'India**. Speaking with him, we discover that he perceives himself primarily as a visual person, especially in the way he conveys emotion. D'India is constantly looking at what's next in his creative quest with an eclectic and courageous spirit as he pushes himself to look at subjects from different perspectives. He doesn't stick to one field and doesn't believe in a label for himself. What sets him apart, is how he sees his subject in the frame of his shot. Photography is seeing what others cannot and the effort can be enormous and infinite. This is reflected through D'India's life, a long adventure of personal and professional choices. We're convinced that he doesn't have a fixed vision of the world as do other photographers; Dario D'India interprets emotion and simply tells a story through his imagery. His work is proof of this.



Q] Dario, when did you start? And why?

A] I started as a kid. In a certain sense, it was photography that found me.

Q] In what sense?

A] Well, I've been a photographer for almost twenty years. I experienced a sort of existential crisis during high school. All of my professors suggested to my parents that I dedicate myself towards studying art.



Q] That's what you wanted, right?

A] My parents didn't agree. They said that "artists die broke and insane," so they made me study engineering. It was a mistake. After four years, I came to the conclusion that it wasn't for me. So, I was wandering around for a while not sure of what I wanted to do. I wanted to study what I liked; in fact, I was looking for something that had to do with the world of fashion and hair-styling. Then I came across an ad, which read: "Photography Course." That is how it all began. I started as a photography assistant for weddings.

Then I moved to Milan and began working full-time as an assistant. But I wanted to come back to Sicily where everyone said that it would be impossible to make a living through advertising, which was partially true. I did however make one. The present economic crisis does make the situation tougher. I need to expand my reach into other markets.

Q] You said you started as a kid ...

A] Yeah, my father bought me a small camera, which started my passion. My parents still didn't understand me. I produced strange, twisted, I'd like to think original photographs. I was hooked. I finally found something I enjoyed. I got by in school but began honing my craft.



Q] In the end, your teachers were right ...

A] That's right. I think it would have been useful to study photography in college. Live and learn.

Q] Passion is important?

A] It's fundamental, especially when times are tough, like now. One cannot live solely on passion though.

Q] Beyond what you've already said, where else did you work?

A] After the photography course, I worked with Peter Ales, who changed my life. He opened my eyes to new horizons. He is very well known in Palermo, also because many top photographers have worked with him. I like to think of him as a cultural wellspring. With him, I learned the technical side of photography. I also took a photography workshop course at the John Kaverdash school.

Q] I noticed that there is a lot of still life on your website ...

A] I enjoy still life, because you can control the light. It's one of my greatest passions.



Q] You also do different types of photography...

A] You're right. What amazed me is the huge demand for specialization. Anyone who loves photography imposes no limits on themselves. I can't take a picture of a girl on the beach and leave out all the rest. Limiting yourself to one genre means becoming a part of the machine. There are so many sensations and emotions out there you can get, just by changing genres.

Q] Getting back to your training, after the John Kaverdash did you attend any other workshops?

A] I attended some photoshop courses. I come from film and there everything was different. With digital everything has changed.

Q] Is there anyone in the industry who inspires you?

A] I feel this passion for photography and I see and appreciate other photographers. I greatly admire Robert Mapplethorpe and David La Chapelle. Over time, however, I started looking at others as little as possible; I didn't want to have outside influences affect my own work. Today, my inspiration comes from movies. Tim Burton is one of my favorite directors.

Q] Photographically, how would you define yourself?

A] I do not know, I think of myself as eclectic. I already told you that I do not like to label myself. For me, it's easier to photograph an object than a model. But I can do both. I don't know how to define myself, also because I don't like saying, "I only do this or I only do that".

Q] Can I label you a photographer?

A] That, you can do.



Q] What is the most important quality that a photographer should have?

A] To go beyond what he or she sees. A photographer should be able to discern what others can only catch a glimpse of.

Q] To "see beyond" is a quality, but also an attitude ...

A] True, and that is partly why I can't read books. If I start to, I immediately think of something else. Evidently, I am primarily a visual person.

Q] B / W or color?

A] I look at the picture I take and wonder, "What is the color meant to do here?". If it doesn't work, I take it out. I like using B/W in portraits.

Q] Twenty years of photography: is there an unfinished project that you'd like to finish?

A] There are many. As I move forward, I have to put them aside, to work.



Q] Can you tell us about a project?

A] I'd like to do an exhibition of my work.

Q] What is the theme of the show you would like to organize?

A] The theme would be focused on the woman and her world. I'm waiting for the budget.

Q] Your city has given you something, useful to your photography?

A] I don't like Palermo very much, along with the urban environment in general. Artistically, I find it very beautiful, as well as the rest of Sicily: it has perhaps restored my sense of art; as for the rest, I haven't been able to renounce it. Maybe elsewhere my life (as a photographer) would have been different, even if here I am well known and not one of the many.

Q] This also is important ...

A] After a few years I have managed to open a photography studio in a loft which is very hard to find in Sicily. I'd like to be based here and work around the world, with the right budget, a stylist and so on. I am still young in any case, at least in terms of photography.



Q] Did you start with the analog?

A] Yes, of course: Polaroid, plates, nights in the Dark Room (I did printing for others too) and so on. I did many things in honor of my passion, even if they didn't all do justice to the ideals of it. When the Light Room came into existence, I saw it as a widening of possi-

bilities on the horizon. Digital has allowed me to materialize what I had in mind. With the analog all was more problematic and often the photo-retouchers had to be argued with. As I was telling you, with new technologies I had to learn another trade, but I get to put everything that resides in my mind on paper without filters.

Q] No regrets about film, then?

A] No, none. The creative possibilities today are infinite. Film has its charm, but I am not a nostalgic.

Q] Do you personally take care of the re-touching?

A] Yes and I run 90% of the work on CameraRAW. For me, Photoshop has become its plugin.

Q] How is the flow of your work?

A] I shoot directly on the PC, select with Bridge, then I pass onto CameraRaw and Photoshop.



Q] What is your favorite lens?

A] I upgraded recently to Canon, about four years ago. I am enraptured by the 90 TS. I had bought it because I lacked the lens tilting, together with 24 mm. and 45 mm. With the 90 mm, however, I am able to do the most unique things: selective and aberrant fires, up to the most provocative beauty shots. I also use those optics for weddings, despite the manual focus.

Q] What camera do you use?

A] EOS 5D Mark II.

Q] Is there, among yours, an image that you are particularly fond of?

A] Yes, and it is one that I never published, because it is truly personal. It was given an award by Peter Ales, and it is a portrait of a lotus flower shot in Palermo's botanical gardens. I remember the moment. There were a lot of people shooting and I was greatly annoyed. I spent more time chatting with Peter. At that point he told me: "Do not stop to look at things the way others see them; think instead of how you would like to see it and put it on film." That sentence changed my life. I mounted a VELVIA 100, threw myself to the ground and photographed a lotus flower.

Q] Studio or exteriors?

A] I love the studio, but for fashion photography I prefer exteriors. I do the framing then place the model. For the portraits, indoors is ideal.



Q] If you could choose, what would you shoot tomorrow?

A] My "Project Woman" which I was telling you about. I would like get a good budget and celebrities.



Q] If you could wish something for yourself, what would it be?

A] I would like an agent who believes in me, then I'd work all over the world, keeping my base being here in Sicily.

Thanks to Dario D'India for the time and the images he dedicate to us.

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