

2018-03-16

ERNESTO BAZAN. CUBAN TRILOGY

In the fall of 1992, I made my first trip to Cuba, on a cheap weeklong package tour bought in Merida, Mexico.

For many years I had strongly desired Cuba, as if longing for a woman that you meet only once and can't get out of your mind. I'm almost certain I lived there in another life.

Never could I have imagined that in Cuba I'd find my destiny, that over there a very important part of my existence both as a man and as a photographer had already been determined.

For fourteen years, I devoted my entire life taking pictures of this transitional time referred to by Fidel Castro as *El Periodo Especial*.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the country was sent reeling towards an uncertain future, leaving Cubans to face dire hardships and profound changes.

My first book *Bazan Cuba* portrays this unique period that the island was undergoing: the struggle to survive in a post-communist world.

I began bearing witness to the strenuous situation created by these abrupt social changes. I began taking pictures of the pervasive feeling of hopelessness and despair that I saw painted on people's faces.

I photographed endless lines, the harrowing struggle to make it from one meal to the other, the poverty of their homes and the slipping sense of identity gripping their lives.

In spite of the suffering, Cubans have shown remarkable reserves of inner strength and patience. They engage life passionately, embracing its fundamental simplicity. I have portrayed their dignity, resourcefulness to cope, their love for children, their passion for music and dance, and the open religious fervor that has pervaded the island since the Pope John Paul the Second's visit.

In December of 1997, I made a stronger commitment to my personal life and my photographic project: I got married to Sissy, my Cuban fiancé. In September of 1998, she gave birth to our twins, Pietro and Stefano. She and my sons have become another source of inspiration. As a result of working from within instead of being a dispassionate observer looking in from the outside, my documentation has taken on an even more personal dimension.

From 1992 to 2001, I exclusively photographed in black and white with two different analogic 35 mm cameras (a Leica M6 and a Canon T-90).

Then in 2002, I started shooting in color my farmer friends in the Cuban countryside.

Knowing that I had color film inside the camera made me start paying more attention to simpler poetry of life.

Al Campo wouldn't have been possible without my passion for the farmers' unadorned, and yet harsh daily life.

At the same time, I also began using a panoramic camera.

Isla is more an all-encompassing book: intimate portraiture, street photography, pastoral landscapes, still life.

The images are probably gentler, more meditative and metaphysical.

If I could encapsulate each book in my trilogy in a few words:

Bazan Cuba: raw poetry.

Al Campo: belonging.

Isla: both a love affair and a valediction.

- Ernesto Bazan

Curator: Tomasz Tomaszewski

Opening: March 16, 2018 (Friday), 7 PM

Admission fee during opening: free

Admission fee 17.03.2018 – 6.05.2018: 7 PLN

Workshops

The more I teach the more I realise how difficult it is to edit your own work. I strongly feel that editing is the photographers' Achilles heel. How many books have we seen, including our own, that could have been much better if we would have done a better editing of our images?

It will be a very intense workshop where we will explore the many aspects of bringing a group of coherent and consistent photographs together. I will look at your best images or your long-term projects (30 images per student). I'll help you eliminate the weaker photographs, the repetitive ones that dilute the impact of the strong ones. I will assist you in the critical sequencing and pacing of each image. In the process, we will learn more about the photographer's approach, his or her framing, the intentions, the photographer's ability to discern from the flow of life in the attempt, often in vain, to extract its essence.

We will critically analyze several important photographic books pointing out what makes them special and also underscoring the causes of the lowering of tension within the book created by many factors among which the inclusion of less powerful images, the wrong pairing of images, bad graphic choices.

I imagine this class as two-day of intense photographic sessions (eight hours daily divided in two sections of four hours each) in which we will listen to the many voices within the group. We will set very high standards for each participant's body of work in order to reach a combination of strong images that will flow in a harmonious way.

In addition to that I'll share with the students two of my future book projects to both show my working method in editing and sequencing a book. I'll let the

students comments on the projects and I'll hopefully be able to follow some of their advice. It's what I've come to describe as choral editing in which I want to listen to all the voices present within a workshop. This is how I've managed to create and self-publish my Cuban trilogy.

Workshop is conducted by: Ernesto Bazan and Tomasz Tomaszewski

Date: 17-18.03.2018, 10 AM - 6 PM

Place: Fort Institute of Photography (reading room), 99 Raławicka St., building #01

Cost of two-day workshop: 890 PLN (the price includes two meals, coffee, tea).

Application: warsztaty@instytutfotografiifort.org.pl

In your message, please send a short cover letter with 15 photographs representing a single subject or up to 15 individual pictures, which will reflect your creativity and sensitivity while ordered in an adequate manner during classes.

Files should have 3000 px (long edge) and a resolution of 72 dpi.

As we expect a broad interest in the workshop, we kindly advise you to apply early. The deadline is set for 26.02.2018.

The Exhibition is sponsored by Holiday Inn Warszawa Józefów ****

www.holiday.aquila.pl/en