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Alejandro Chaskielberg



Invited photographer of Goa Photo 2015.

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🚩 *Entrevista em português.*

Alejandro Chaskielberg (Buenos Aires, 1977) is Director of Photography graduated from the Argentina's National Film and Audiovisual Art Institute. He started working as photojournalist and then directing documentaries for TV. He has also photographed several films and short films and has developed audiovisual projects in different countries like Argentina, Kenya, Bolivia, Cuba, Japan, Surinam and Netherlands.

In this interview he told us about the beginning of his career, his opinion about photobooks and his experience on living in the islands of the Paraná River Delta to make the series “La Creciente” he will be showing on Goa Photo 2015.

How did you start in photography? How was your first contact with a camera?

When I turned ten years old my classmates gave me my first camera. It was a plastic 126mm Kodak Sportiva. From that moment

on I begin to take pictures and buy other cameras. My first professional camera I had at age 12 and at 15 I began studying photographic technique. I have always quite self-taught with the Ansel Adams books under my arms.

Can you tell us a little bit of your career in photography?

I studied at the National Institute of Cinematography, at the same time that i worked as press photographer for a magazine in Buenos Aires. I devoted to the portrait and social photography. After that I spent several years without photographing, and I no longer wanted to continue working as a photojournalist. So I devoted myself to music, studying violin at the Conservatory of Classical Music. Then I started to make documentaries for television and other audiovisual works.

To make “La Creciente” I got isolated in the islands of the Paraná River Delta for two years. During that time I used a boat to go buy food or visit friends. I have worked on other similar sites: in the Bolivian jungle together with the Oxfam NPO and in the Paraguayan Chaco with National Geographic. In the rainforest of Suriname i photographed abandoned sugar mills for a story about the sugar for Noortherlicht. I did a project in Kenya, in the region of Turkana, with communities that suffered from hungry for

Oxfam. I am currently completing my second book Otsuchi Future memories that I shot in Japan, in a small fishing village destroyed by the tsunami of 2011.



Alejandro Chaskielberg, Otsuchi Future memories.

What kind of photography you do? Can you

define it?

I consider myself a documentary photographer eager to experience the limits of the medium.

About the work "La Creciente" how did you get this idea, and how was the photographic process?

In 2007 I began to visit a friend who lived in the islands of the Paraná River Delta. I carried my board camera and did my first night photographs with this format. At the time i already knew our neighbors: some native islanders and temporary workers who worked in afforestation. I began to portray them during the nights of full moon, in exposures of 5 to 10 minutes of length. In this first year of work I did 12 images and got into bankruptcy. During the following year I devoted myself to apply to awards and scholarships, at the time that I met Martin Parr, who invited me to expose in the Biennial of Brighton. In May of 2009 i was awarded several of these awards and scholarships and i was able to go back to the Delta for another two years to finish the book.



Alejandro Chaskielberg, La Creciente, 2008.

For you what was the most important output from this series?

I think the most important to me is to have found a particular way to tell a story. In one hand, from using very simple technical

resources as the plate camera, diapositive slides and flashlights. On the other hand, to shoot night portraits with people and real situations recreated during the night. I believe that the work generates empathy to people who do not necessarily understand about photography thanks to its visuality and color work. For me an interesting result is having photographed poor and marginal people, and display them without a melancholic or accuser appreciation, but rather characters that are exalted by the image.

So far where have you presented this work?

I presented this work in the Brighton Biennial (UK), in the Festival Paraty em Foco (Brazil), the New York Photo Festival (USA), the Noorderlicht festival (Netherlands), in the World Photography Awards in Somerset House (UK), in the Scan Festival of Tarragona (Spain), Boston University (USA), El Ojo Salvaje (Paraguay), Cordoba Biennial (Argentina), in the National Geographic Headquarters (USA). Also I exhibited twice in Tokyo.



Alejandro Chaskielberg, La Creciente, 2008.

And what do you expect from the Goa's audience?

I am very interested in hearing the feedback from Goa's audience, i am very happy to be able to show it for the first time in India.

The theme of Goa Photo's first edition is "The Other", so can you tell us how is "the other" present in the series you are going to present there?

The Paraná River Delta is a wonderful place very close to the city of Buenos Aires, and I had always found it strange that there was no photographic works that would tell the life in the islands. The people who I portrayed in La Creciente generally live isolated and without contact with the city. It is very difficult to get in contact with them if you do not live in the place. It took me time to understand that I should move to the islands of the Delta to be able to bring an everyday life with them and be able to portray them. I had to leave my house in the town, buy a boat, rain boots and a bowie knife. I ceased to be an inhabitant of the city and I became a good friend of the islanders, and even today I still keep in touch with them. My body change with the work on the islands, my Spanish accent change and I had to leave to be the "Other" to be able to make this work.

Your latest project "Otsuchi Future Memories" has received in 2014 the 5th RM Iberoamerican Photobook Award. So, what do you think about this format? Do you like to present photography works as photobooks?

With the time I convinced myself that a photobook is the best way to put an end to a photo project. It is not a set of images submitted together, and with its materiality and its visuality offers you a new work. I set an individual and private relationship with each book that I have, because the books are read alone. And it generates on me an empathy and love with some of them



Alejandro Chaskielberg, Otsuchi Future memories.

As an artist, beyond the role of promoting photographers works, what do you think is the importance of a festival, and what can it do for photography?

I think the importance of festivals lies in bringing photography to viewers who are not in the photographic medium, but can get into the dynamics of a festival and have a particular clipping of the photography when seeing many jobs at once.

Have you ever been in Goa?

I have never been in India, is one of the places I most want to meet and photograph. I think the atmosphere and the colors of India are ideal for my photography. Unfortunately I can not attend because while Goaphoto, I will be presenting a solo show and giving workshops in Tokyo. It owes my visit!

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