

Russia BEYOND THE HEADLINES

Master black-and-white photographer impressed by Moscow's colors

September 8, 2012
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American photographer Wendy Paton, well-known in New York and Paris, has taken her black-and-white portraits to Moscow with the exhibition 'Visages de Nuit'. The exhibition will be on display in the Lumiere Brothers Center for Photography through October 7, 2012.

The Visages de Nuit exhibition of award winning fine arts photographer Wendy Paton is a personal and intimate glimpse into our ineffable, human presence, presented in mesmerizing, black-and-white, graphic compositions. Source: Wendy Paton

A disciple of such legendary photographs as Michael Kenna and Chuck Kelton, Wendy Paton took a walk around Moscow with her traditional Leica camera and discovered some mesmerizing moments worth capturing on film.



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Russia Beyond the Headlines: What is your first impression of Moscow?

Wendy Paton: Sometimes you are invited somewhere and you go there thinking that you'll never return. But with Moscow, I feel 100 percent sure that I will come back.

love the energy of the local people. They are really genuine and I feel a connection with them. I'm reporting human nature when I take photographs, so this kind of communicative chemistry is indispensable.

For me black-and-white photography is preferable, and it can be even more colorful and rich than color photography. But I was fascinated by Moscow's brightness! Compared to my native city of New York, where you can find plenty of energy but an eternal shortage of space and color, the Russian capital is absolutely amazing. When I see St. Basil's Cathedral or the Kremlin's towers sparkling in the sun, I regret that I don't have color film with me.

RBTH: How do you find the subjects and heroes for your photo series?

W.P.: I like this definition. Because, for me, all of the people I photograph are truly my heroes. I can find a hero in anyone. I don't necessarily need to meet them and don't want to know that much about them—just some details that allow my imagination to do the rest. Communicating with people is the principal way in which I perceive the world: every time it's a new introduction.

I've found that the night has some mysterious capabilities – it changes people. So it was intriguing to work in the dark, especially in big cities, where you can stay with the crowd and in the distance at the same time. Just watch from the darkness and catch the accidental moment. That's how I do it.

RBTH: Where can one meet the people in your photographs?

W.P.: Paris, New York, Chicago, London... Wherever I am, I always take my beloved Leica photo camera with me. It's small. Besides, I use only one lens and no flash. I can just walk into the middle of a crowd, take pictures, and people won't notice this; it's as if I was a tourist taking pictures on vacation. And that's what I need – to remain unnoticed.

RBTH: What did you learn from Michael Kenna and Chuck Kelton?

W.P.: Practicing with Michael Kenna and printing with Chuck Kelton gave me a good foundation. I learned the intricacy of photographing at night and the miraculous process of manual printing.

Although my first tutor (Michael Kenna) prefers landscapes and urban views, I've chosen portraits, because this is my way of communicating through photography. And a face is certainly not the only thing that can be a portrait. It can be a silhouette or, for instance, a hand.

RBTH: We know that you left behind a successful career training and riding race horses in New York for photography. Why did you do that?

W.P.: Actually, I was a really successful horse racer and trainer. I loved what I was doing, and it was one of my dreams, but I also had always loved the arts. In 1981, I bought a professional camera and was thrilled by the fact that I could create something.

Surprisingly, my experience horseracing helps me with nighttime photography. In our racing drills, we had to make quick decisions and not overthink them. For a photographer, this is also a required skill. If you see something worth shooting around the corner at a given moment, it's not going to be there five minutes later. Thanks to horseracing, I've learned to take photographs fast and without excessive reflection. It seems to be the only thing in my life that I don't overthink - just following instincts.

http://rbth.ru/articles/2012/09/08/master_black-and-white_photographer_impressed_by_moscows_colors_18077.html