

'365' Photography

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1. <http://365mag.ru/culture/dzhon-r-pepper-tsvet-otnimaet-silu-u-istinnogo-snimka-i-tol-kotvlekaet-vnimanie-zritelya>

"Color only distracts the viewer".

John R. Pepper

Italian photographer John Pepper works exclusively with analog black and white film, doesn't give titles to his works, doesn't indicate the date they were created and avoids staged shots. Maria Didyaeva, correspondent of "365", visited the exhibition opening and talked with the talented photographer about his views on the world of photography.

John Pepper lives and works in Paris, Rome and New York. He received his first camera, a "Pentax", as a gift from his father when he was 12 years old. At 14 he apprenticed to the famous photographer Ugo Mulas at the same time as his first photograph was published in "Newsweek Magazine". In 1976 John graduated Princeton University with a degree in art history, and for over thirty years Pepper has a career in photography, theater directing and in filmmaking. He remains true to analog photography and doesn't use modern digital technology, which doesn't prevent him from being one of the most respected artists in our time.

365: John, in addition to photos, you are engaged in directing and shooting films. What is the difference in the process between the creation of photos and film?

John Pepper: No matter what the process of creation, films and photos both tell stories about people and their lives and that is what I am interested in. Through these means one can bring attention to certain questions about life and/or tell the world about something that is important to the artist. However there is a difference and that is that working on photos is a solitary activity while films and theatre are always a collective journey.

365: The project "Evaporations" was created in 2012 - 2013. Have you changed your attitude to the series, would you like to change something?

John Pepper: No, the series is done, completed and my attitude to it remains unchanged. These images are about the relationships between man and water. I'm currently working on other projects and I have no desire to revisit Evaporations; it is complete.

365: The name of project "Evaporations" has a philosophic meaning — everything in this world is temporary and sooner or later evaporates. Why did you choose this theme and why it is so close to you?

John Pepper: I believe it is close to me, you, all of us. My works observe man's way and his evolution. Water escapes from our hands, like life.

365: You work only with black and white film. Would you like to try digital technology?

John Pepper: I'm a faithful to the classical tradition, which, according to some, is already obsolete. I really like to keep the image as they appear on the negative. I like this process and aim to make good images without any additional manipulation.

365: The black and white color scheme creates a melancholic mood. Why don't you want to work with color?

John Pepper: Choosing black and white, we choose the absence of color. Color is an additional element and takes away from the image. I think, it also distracts attention of the viewer.

365: You have working with photography for more than 40 years. How, in your opinion, has the graphic language changed over that time?

John Pepper: In my case, it has not changed since I'm still working with film and developer. But world of the photography has changed: digital technology has appeared and the speed of the computer has changed everything. However a bond remains between digital and film photography: in both there is the need to capture the interesting shot which forces the viewer to pay attention and think about something.

365: Now you are working on the new series and book "Deserts/Drought"; can we consider it as continuation of the series "Evaporations"?

John Pepper: Yes, definitely. Desert sand is dense and water is liquid, but they are different only in appearance. Both have the common property of being able to escape from us. If you place them in the palm of your hands and unclasp your fingers, you cannot hold them, like time - -and theme of time is close to all of us.

365: Did you have that critical moment in your life, when you wanted to give up everything, and stop as a photographer and filmmaker?

John Pepper: Yes, every day ! But I just do what I do. When I create, I feel that I live in the fullest sense of the word. And in those moments when I feel like I want to give it all up I realize that I feel like that because I am not creating - -its as though I don't feel the flow of life.

365: If you could talk to yourself when you were in the beginning of your career, what advice would you give to a young John Pepper?

John Pepper: I would say so many things to him for which we don't have enough time right now! But you know what the most important thing is? Looking back, I understand, that I have lived my life with few regrets. That is a great satisfaction.

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