



“In-Conversation”

December 2007

Featuring

Miss Anne Bryant
Professional Photographer

Interview conducted by
Steven Yee Pui Chung

ABOUT ANNE BRYANT

Anne Hunton Bryant is a professional photographer from New York City. Following in the footsteps of such renowned photographers as Richard Avedon, she graduated from Parsons School of Design in Manhattan with a degree in Fine Art Photography.

Anne's award-winning photography has been exhibited in galleries ranging from Manhattan's art district, Chelsea, to the Mississippi Museum of Art. Her images have been published by magazines such as: *Newsweek*, *Hamptons*, *Gotham*, and *LA Confidential*. She served on the photo editing staffs of *Glamour*, *Details* and *Niche Media*.

She has also had the privilege of assisting a number of successful editorial, documentary photographer allowing her to get an inside scope of both sides of the industry. Anne has been in Singapore since January and is currently working as photographer for Renate Kant Asia, an Art Conservation and Restoration Studio on Mandalay Road. Some of her works can be found on www.annebryant.com

EXHIBITIONS

- 2006 Peer Gallery: New York, NY, USA
- “*The Mississippi Project*”: Installation including video documentary, 50 x 50” framed photographs and 30 page photo album including Polaroids, 35mm/ medium/ large format film C-Prints and digital prints.
- 2005 Thomas Werner Gallery: New York, USA
- “*The South- Before the Change*”: Fine art 25 x 25” c-prints of rural South landscapes before the construction of shopping malls.
- 2004 Chane Studio: Jackson, MS, USA
- “*Portraits*”: 8 x 10” black and white photographs of characters young and old
- 2002 The Mississippi Museum of Art: Jackson, MS, USA
- “*Technology*”: Installation relating to the advances in technology. Expressing the concern for what computers will become.

Questions:

1. How did you get your start in photography?

I've always been interested in photography. Ever since I was little I would see frames that I wanted to photograph but just didn't have the equipment. I grew up in a family of artists and my grandfather, in particular, was a frequent traveller and always had a camera of some sort around his neck. I loved looking through the photos he had taken throughout his life and it meant a lot to me. I knew I wanted to have an album of my own one day but taken a step further from the typical vernacular photography.

I got my first 35 mm Nikon camera when I started university as a business student. Although I began school on a trajectory leading to the corporate world, soon my interest in photography would draw me down a completely different path. I enrolled in a photography course as an elective but ended up spending the night printing in the darkroom and neglecting my business studies. But it wasn't until my Photography professor asked me to assist her in Italy that everything changed. I was ecstatic because I love to travel and ended up winning a photo competition with the images from the trip. That was a pivotal moment in my life because it gave me the courage to transition from my reliable business track career to the much more uncertain world of professional photography and art.

2. What made you choose photography as a career? Why Photojournalism?

I knew I wanted to do something that made me happy; a career that I would enjoy even if money were not an issue. I see so many people that are miserable in their corporate jobs and I am the type of person that cannot be caged up in the office for the typical 9 to 5 job, so I knew I did not want that. I love to explore and for me being able to document vivid moments and images that I experience is a natural high. I hope to make a difference in the world through my photography.

3. What is your favourite topic/specialization in photography?

I love it all! I have a difficult time fitting neatly into any one single category. But if I had to choose, I would say Fine Art Photography. It offers the freedom to creatively approach any photograph; particularly photos that evoke emotion. I find that the specific subject matter is less important than the interplay within the image and between the photograph and its viewers. This reminds me of a photo I took of a toy boat in Saigon. For some reason I was attracted to it and decided to photograph it (I do my best to not hold back when I have the urge, I try to listen to my gut instinct). It was only when I printed it out and held the



photograph in hand that I noticed that the concrete it was sitting on mimicked the shape of waves in the ocean. It was an uncanny resemblance. Many people have seen that photo but only one so far has commented on the same comparison that I noticed. These days, with the simplicity of digital photography, I feel like people spend less time thinking about what the photograph means to them.

4. Which is your first assignment? Any special thoughts?

My first assignment was shooting for a *Newsweek* article. I was extremely nervous because it was for such a well-known publication. I think the most important thing about shoots like that is to be organized. Make sure you have all the equipment you could possibly need and more. I took two of everything and thank God I did because one of the flashes quit working.

5. What was your first big break in your career?

After working in media and assisting a number of prominent photographers for some time, Niche Media, which houses and publishes a stable of six affluent lifestyle magazines in the US, approached me for a full-time position as staff photographer. I started working there before I even graduated so I felt a lot of pressure and insecurity, wondering if I had made the right decision. It's just about taking the plunge though, I'm realizing that more and more. To get out there and just do your best. It will always teach you something. I've had some good experiences but I'm still waiting for that BIG break.

6. How have you seen your work evolve over the years? How are they affected by your work life and family life?

I can see in my photographs that I am becoming more confident. I take more risk and involve more people. I used to be intimidated by production but now I find it fun. Although, I still enjoy documenting and the simplicity of that as well. My photos are very personal, so they are definitely affected by my work and family life. When my last grandparent passed away and we were moving everything out of their house I photographed their empty bedroom. You could see the impression of where their beds were on the carpet and the change of paint color on the wall from where the rest of the furniture had been. There were two light switches on either side of the empty bed spaces. One was smooth and delicate like my grandmother and the other was geometric, sharp and masculine like my grandfather. It was then that it really hit me that they were gone. I still get very emotional when I look at that image. It brings tears to my eyes.

7. What do you want people to see in your photograph?

Something unique and different. And it would be great if people saw some talent in my photos.

8. How do you interact with the people in your photographs?

When shooting portraits or documentary, I allow the model to be themselves. I do my best to make them feel comfortable and since a lot of people tend to tense up in front of the camera, I take around 20 warm-up shots. That helps them to become less aware of the camera and more relaxed.

For fashion models, I usually have certain poses and expressions in mind before I shoot them but I let them work it out at first and see how comfortable they are without direction. Then I take over and guide them in order to get what I'm looking for. But sometimes they give it to me on their own which I find looks more natural in the photos.

9. What is your most interesting experience during your photo shoot which you would like to share?

Probably when I was photographing this model in the dark. I had a vision of the shot I wanted but it turned out to be more difficult than I was expecting. I wanted to have a different lighting effect, so I was

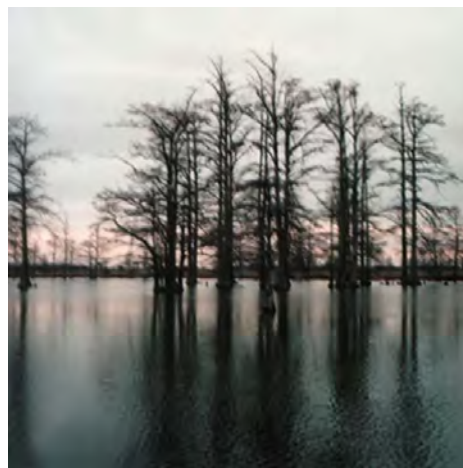
experimenting with doing a long exposure and painting with a flash light. I couldn't see where I was shining the light and since I had decided to shoot with film, I had no idea if it was going to turn out. I tried to shoot it in digital but was not getting the results I was looking for. I'm very glad I stuck to it because it turned out just as I had envisioned. It was a great feeling, I recommend for everyone to keep trying until you get the shot that you're aiming for.



10. How do you get inspirations for your works, especially a series or project?

Personal thinking, time, relaxation- but a lot of times I get overwhelmed and confuse myself with so many ideas. Usually I am inspired when I quit thinking and worrying about it. Once the pressure is gone, somehow it all just unravels and works itself out. Since my work is very personal to me, I think a lot of it happens subconsciously.

11. Which is your favourite photograph? Any special reason?



I like this image because it looks like a painting to me. I felt a connection with nature when I was photographing it. Nothing significantly special. It is just peaceful to me, but I'm sure it may look eerie to some people, but that's what I find interesting; that everyone evokes a different feeling.

12. Which photographer inspired you most? What did you learn from him?

There are many. William Eggleston, Walker Evans, Cindy Sherman, Robert Frank, and Bill Brandt all inspired me in different, but very important ways.

William Eggleston, for example, taught me to place value on the personal side of the art and to think more creatively about colour photography and the interplay of the vantage points of the photographer, the subject and the viewer. He's known as the "pioneer of color photography" and since I was only shooting with black and white at the time he definitely helped evoke my interest in moving to color. Also, he's from Mississippi as well so that probably explains why I relate to his photographs so dramatically.

13. How does photography enrich your life?

It allows me to focus on things I might overlook if I didn't take the time to slow down and explore. It reminds me of certain feelings and important times in my life.

14. What would you say is the new challenge for photography as a whole?

There is a big, internal debate within the photography world pertaining to digital vs film. On one side of the spectrum is the tech-savvy, "we can do anything with an image" school of thought. And on the other hand, there are the purists who don't take digital photography as seriously. As with all things, the way forward lies somewhere in the middle.

15. As an advice to beginners, how can they improve in their path in photography?

Get out there and shoot. Do not hesitate to photograph something that catches your eye. Shoot constantly and always carry a camera. Organize film or digital files and print good quality photos to get critiqued as often as possible.

Works

