

entertainment

BEHIND HER LENS

In a crowded place like Patan, where it's hard to escape the constant hum, Image Ark silently plays its joyful song through Päivi Maria Wells' photographic pulse. For her, the camera is just a tool and her experience is her art

TEXT BY SRIZU BAJRACHARYA

It's hard to imagine a photographer not running around trying to get the best shot. But Päivi Maria Wells is an anomaly. She doesn't chase pictures; instead, she lets her subjects come to her to be captured.

Päivi Maria was busy pinning frames to her photographs when I interviewed her earlier this Friday.

A reserved person, one could notice her gentle ways with her artwork. Her photographs are like poems. They can be read, and they can make a person feel warm and heavy. And rather than appearing to be moments frozen in time, her pictures resemble paintings that see life as it is, with no filters to dull real emotions.

When did you start thinking about photography?

I grew up in Finland where I specialized in wood artwork. Later, I took art as rehabilitation. Art for me has always been a healing process. I used to etch and draw, and photography actually came into my life much later. It's been a while now and I feel the experiences are what make my photos count.

What was your motivation for 'Pulse'?

'Pulse' began with me living in Kathmandu for four years. I started visiting the older parts of town, the busy chowks. Previously, I had been photographing a lot of nature, like in my earlier exhibition, 'Solitudes'. My motivation for 'Pulse' is the same as it was for 'Solitudes'. It is a quiet contemplated process. Even though I go to crowded places, once I find my spot I don't move. I let everybody come to me. Sometimes, I am attracted to sounds - bells, temples. It's a very joyful process so you really need to stay focused.

What do you really want to say with your photographs and how do you get your photographs to do that?

That's out of my hands. The pictures sometimes just happen. I can't make the audience think, I can't force my experiences upon them. But the important part is for us to stop judging our works and just let things happen by doing our best and enjoying the process.

Do you go out thinking "I want to click this today"? How do you do it?

I think the photograph is secondary. What I really want to be doing is experiencing the moment. I want to listen, I want to see, and I want to observe. And when I think everything has come together, I start taking the photograph. There are days when I see nothing and there are days when I see things that get me. It just flows. I don't have to think about what I am doing, it just happens.

Would you say your photographic journey began in Nepal?

Well, the journey didn't begin in Nepal but it took a hold

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here. It led me to a whole new dimension. This place is so inspiring and culturally rich. I felt like I needed to capture the essence of the place. But I never felt I had to document the place according to others because I am only interested in my experience. So, it becomes my Kathmandu and my Kathmandu is all about the motion, blur, noise, movement, day life, color, and textures.

Which particular place in Kathmandu did you like to shoot the most?

Around Ason. It wasn't a very large area at all, I kept going back to the same chowk, the same street or corner, and the same lady that sells oranges. I don't run around with my camera.

What do you think will happen to photography 10 to 20 years down the road?

I think there will be a lot of photographers and I think and hope that people are going to take a step back. There are going to be a lot of cameras, a lot of development, more opportunities. I also feel that people are going to take time taking their pictures; they are going to look for photographic prints. Virtual photographs, I believe, miss feelings. I need my photographs in prints, I need to feel them.

What is your perspective in 'Pulse'?

This time, I wanted to capture what I think is the sense of the city. This constant motion, blur, and bustle. And I think it's okay

to want to capture beauty even though the reality is a little chaotic.

What do you think a photographer can see that others can't?

So much more. You can actually see a lot more if you stop and observe things. I see stories, connections.

If you could be invisible, what would you click?

Oh, I still would have to work on the ground. I am not interested in whether I am seen or not, but if I could fly, I think it would be groovy.

Päivi Maria Wells is an artist/photographer from Finland. She graduated from the West Finland Institute for Art, Craft and Design in 1995 and further studied visual arts and art therapy. Her solo exhibition 'Pulse' is currently being exhibited at Image Ark. She also has a wearable art collection. Some of the photographic shawls are from her previous exhibition 'Solitudes'. You can get them now at Image Ark.

