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10 Questions Stuart Klipper

American fine art photographer Stuart Klipper shoots the world with a Linhof Technorama 617. Nick Smith finds out more

IN BRIEF

Age 67

Where based
Minneapolis,
Minnesota

Time as a pro
Since my 20s

Home or studio
66.66% of my
house is work area

Website Go to my
Facebook page and
click on photos

New York's Museum of Modern Art, the V&A Museum, The Library of Congress, The National Museum of American Art – just some of the many institutions to have featured Stuart Klipper's images.

An American fine art photographer with an international reputation, Klipper has spent decades travelling the planet in order to 'seek out order'. His vision is expressed through a battered old Linhof Technorama 617 that he keeps in a well-loved old gadget bag. He wears rings of turquoise, sapphire and Navajo silver on every finger. Stuart Klipper doesn't take photographs. He prefers to use the word 'make', as an artist makes art. When asked why he prefers the 'wide-field' format he simply says 'because it's wider'. He has made pictures from the North Pole to the South Pole and all 50 American states (*see above*). His new book *The Antarctic: From the Circle to the Pole* is published by Chronicle Books.

1 When did you first realise you were going to become a photographer?

Photography was a hobby among many. I went to college at University of Michigan and I read John Van Druton's *I am a camera*. I realised I had a predisposition to seek out some sort of order. I realised I am a camera, and so I decided to use one.

2 What was your first camera?

My dad documented my life with excess beyond even a presidential documentary photographer. Cameras were everywhere, mostly Kodak. I got my first real camera aged 13 with my Bah Mitzvah money; it was a Rolleicord twin lens reflex.

3 What formal training do you have?

I'm pretty much an autodidact, but I hung around after my degree and took a few courses in the art school. A guy called Phil Davies taught a very technical introduction to photography, and there was another fellow that taught the aesthetics and design side.

4 How important is it to specialise?

Of all the things I've been called in life, one of the things I enjoy most is 'a generalist'. I look at everything with equanimity. I don't think anything is intrinsically more special than anything else. Everything's fair game.

5 What is the best assignment you've been on?

About a dozen years ago someone from the New York Times commissioned me to shoot a story about a small city in South Dakota that was remarkably economically successful. I was just going around town photographing street scenes.

6 What's the worst thing about being a professional photographer?

You travel a lot and you mostly travel alone. There are certain aspects of the unsought solitude that can get to you. It's finally started to become a bit corrosive, but you do your work no matter what.

7 Film or digital, why?

I'm not a Luddite. Film is what the Linhof uses. A consignment of film arrived recently and the rolls all tumbled out. I was surprised by the feeling of looking at all these photographs waiting to be made.

8 What's the most important thing you've learned from another photographer?

The two photographers that sum it up in one sentence are Ansel Adams and Garry Winogrand. For over 30 years I've been a close friend of Lee Friedlander. We hardly ever talk about photography, but there is something osmotic coming through about how to live life as a photographer.

9 What does photography mean to you?

I have an extremely broad range of interest, and if there is one place where I can synthesise what I know about the world it's through photography. It's the most important way of getting a handle on the world.

10 What makes a great photograph?

Photography isn't about photography; it's about the world. I just make pictures. There are no rules. Find your own vocabulary. ■

IN STUART'S CAMERA BAG

CAMERAS Linhof Technorama 617, Mamiya 7, Konica Hexar

FILM Fuji Provia 100F 120 roll film and Provia 35mm film