



CHRIS ZEDANO

Born 1981, Lima, Peru

Why photography?

My interest in photography emerged while I was processing images at a photo studio. My enthusiasm intensified after witnessing a friend's passionate commitment to photography. Photography allows me to express my interpretation of the world around me; to explore fragments of life and to interact with people whom I would normally not engage. My camera is my passport to an unexplored world. I am deeply interested in people. My subject choice derives from my innate curiosity. I am curious as to what lies behind their eyes, where they have been and where they hope to go. My photographs are not always a true representation of the subject in front of my camera. I scrutinize the subjects in front of me, break the paradigms and generalizations, and create my own interpretation. An image should evoke a feeling. My goal as a photographer is to determine what that feeling is, whether positive or negative, happy or sad, true or ironic, reality or fantasy. My desire is for my images to trigger something very profound within the observer.

Formal / informal photographic education?

I learned by simply taking casual photographs during my free time. I then took some lighting workshops at the School of Visual Arts in New York City.

What is the role of photography in your life?

I love the balance of having a steady income from a full-time day job while enjoying the freedom and creative outlet to work on photographic projects I'm interested in.

Who are your artistic influences?

Portrait photographers Richard Avedon, Mark Seliger, Martin Schoeller, Nigel Parry and Peter Lindbergh. I admire the documentary-style work of Mary Ellen Mark.

How do you describe "home"?

Although I was born in Lima, Peru, New York City has been my home for the past seven years — since 2002. There is so much to explore; I am still fascinated.

Where can we find your work?

This project is at www.staplestreetproject.com. My latest project, called "Intimate-NYC," is at www.intimateNYC.com.

STAPLE STREET PROJECT



by

Chris Zedano

*An additional 14 images are included in LensWork Extended #90,
as well as an audio interview with the photographer.
Also see Zedano's work at www.chriszedano.com*

Staple Street Project represents my exploration of the most diverse characters one can find in New York City, encapsulated in a timeless place.

One day as I was walking around in one of my favorite neighborhoods, TriBeCa, I came across Staple Street. I was captivated by it. The street has a grimy, industrial — and to me — romantic feel to it, despite its proximity to the trendy, high-end real estate that has spread throughout lower Manhattan like an oil slick. I started wondering what I could do here; I knew it would be the perfect background for something magical to happen.

I set out to connect with different characters and performers from all over the city by bringing them to this narrow and interesting space. I met artists and eccentrics of all stripes: dancers, jugglers, actors, magicians, body painters, mimes, card sharks, singers, clowns. They were vibrant, defiant, shy, sad, sly, witty, odd, exuberant, angry — giving a perfect representation of the city itself, and of this tiny street that dates back to at least the early 19th century.

This project took a lot of coordination and networking. I worked on it for two years. I would connect with people every night and try to sell them the project. It was very hard at the beginning, since I didn't have images yet to convey my idea. I would go to the venues to meet sideshow performers. Once I worked with them, I would join their social networking sites and introduce myself to their friends (with their consent). I would also go out and walk the villages (in NYC) to find interesting people. I was only able to work on the project on the weekends so I would try to schedule one subject per hour, then work long days with no breaks.

The beginning was tough since I was working solo and I didn't know the people in the neighborhood — so you might see me chasing my Chimera umbrella down the street since it would get very windy. (I work with a Nikon D3, Profoto Acute 600, 1 profoto light, Chimera softbox or umbrella, pocket wizards and my 35mm lens.) Soon the residents on Staple Street became friends, however, and would allow us to use their places for costume changes or a restroom break. The toughest thing was also trusting someone — whom I just met minutes ago — to watch my expensive equipment while I popped into the coffee shop for a quick rest stop. Luckily, the people I worked with were awesome. It really helped me break all the paradigms and learn that sometimes looks deceive most of us. I started working with one subject at a time, but with the support of my girlfriend and the confidence that I developed, I would have up to 18 people at a time. It would be any other day in TriBeCa, but then you would have a guy photographing 16 topless burlesque girls on Staple Street. The police stopped by and checked it out. Luckily they didn't stop us from working. I guess they're used to seeing a lot of stuff happening in TriBeCa.

























