

BLACK & WHITE MAGAZINE FOR COLLECTORS OF FINE PHOTOGRAPHY

B&W

**THE
UNKNOWN
JOCK
STURGES**



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LARRY SNIDER

It was the need for a creative alternative to the rigors of the legal profession, as well as a bit of sage advice from his first photography instructor, that ignited Larry Snider's passion for photography. "I needed a diversion and had always been interested in photography," explains Snider, a Chicago-based attorney and partner in the 10th-largest law firm in the country. "I had traveled around the world in 1960 and taken a lot of photographs, but photography eventually got lost in the shuffle."

It wasn't until 1975, at the age of 35, that Snider renewed his interest in photography and began studying the basics of exposure, processing and printing with a student enrolled at the Cranbrook Art Academy in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. "The student who taught me how to develop film told me that in order to become a good photographer, you had to look at good photographs. I went to a local photography gallery and instead of just looking, I started buying," recalls Snider, who ended up acquiring an extensive collection of masterworks by such artists as Irving Penn, Robert Frank, André Kertész, Edward Weston and Ansel Adams.

For the past 25 years, Snider has been traveling and actively photographing around the world, with extensive trips throughout Asia. What distinguishes and elevates Snider's work beyond the mere hobbyist is the depth of his interest and appreciation for the cultures he photographs, his ability to engage the people he encounters in a directly personal and inti-



mate way, and his wonderful sensitivity for the environment in which he encounters his subjects. "My tendency is to engage the subject as opposed to doing candid work," agrees Snider, who stayed four days at a monastery school in Labrang in northern India before taking the image shown at the top of page 104.

While acknowledging that broad cultural differences can present obstacles to effective photographic portraiture, Snider believes it is his willingness to take the time to immerse himself in his subjects' lives that allows him to penetrate the veil that can separate people with otherwise similar beliefs and feelings. "The tendency in many of these areas is for the people to become stiff and very formal when I go to photograph them," admits Snider, "but beyond that there aren't really any barriers to overcome. I usually travel with a guide who can act as interpreter, and a lot of times I'll hang around until the people get comfortable with my presence. As an occidental I can't

hide in these places, but if I hang around while they're just sitting there, pretty soon they act normal and won't stiffen up."

Snider shoots primarily with a Hasselblad equipped with an 80mm normal lens, a focal length that allows him to document his subjects within a broader environmental context. Working exclusively in black and white, and favoring fairly straightforward exposure and darkroom techniques, Snider's photographs nevertheless display a sublime appreciation for light and share a knowing closeness with their subjects.

In the image of the man with the opium pipe (see page 104), Snider's unexpected encounter with a wizened patriarch in a small village in China, and his ability to relate to his subjects on an immediate personal level, results in a photograph that is a testament to the universal pride, self-assurance and seeming nobility of old age. "That picture was taken in 1990 on my first trip to China right after Tiananmen Square," recalls Snider. "That was a lonely trip. There were very few Westerners and few Chinese would talk to you as a foreigner. I wandered into a small village along the Burma Road in the southern province of Yunnan, where the mayor insisted I come to his house for tea. There was a guy sitting there in the mayor's house with his long pipe. I decided to photograph him almost immediately because I didn't want to risk that he would move."

Snider's work has been exhibited extensively throughout the US, with many of his photographs

included in the permanent collections of such institutions as the Art Institute of Chicago, the Center for Creative Photography at the University of Arizona, the San Francisco Museum of Art, and the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston. Snider has two exhibitions scheduled this year at the Museum for Contemporary Photography in Chicago and the Kalamazoo Museum of Art, both in connection with the publication this spring of a collection of approximately 50 portraits selected from work produced during his trips to Asia over the past 10 years. Entitled *A World Away*, the monograph is published by Pegasus Publishing of Chicago. —Richard Pitnick

■ PRINT INFORMATION

Prints are gelatin silver, mounted on archival rag board. All prints are signed and titled in the artist's hand on the mount, and are stamped on verso. 11x14-inch mounted prints start at \$650, 16x20-inch mounted prints start at \$800.

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YOUNG MONKS AT LIKIR MONASTERY—1998



MONKS OF YELLOW HAT SECT AT LABRANG MONASTERY - 1993



MAN WITH LONG PIPE - 1990



YOUNG WOMAN AT WINDOW—1999