



# INTRODUCTION

Photography, in the digital age, is more accessible than at any time in its history. On the internet and in print, photographic images proliferate in huge numbers and are growing hourly. Cameras are easier to use and offer ever higher quality digital files, while the range of images being created is richer and the methods more varied than ever. At the same time, photography-related courses at colleges and universities continue to grow and rising numbers of magazines, books, DVDs and website tutorials offer detailed 'how-to-do-it' advice.

All this photographic activity raises questions. What underlies this hunger for more and more pictures? What inspires photographers to create their images? What drives them and what do they aim to achieve?

I began investigating these questions several years ago, while working as a journalist specializing in photography. When interviewing some of the world's most successful photographers, I was always curious to find out what motivated them. What, I wondered, produced their combination of creative ability and determination to succeed, qualities that set them apart from countless others working in the same field? My questions also related to the wider subject of photography itself. What made them choose this particular medium as a vehicle for creative expression?

When I came to write this book, I decided to focus attention on these sorts of questions and ideas. To keep numbers pleasingly round, I approached the subject through discussions with 50 photographers, using 50 of their pictures and picking out 100 key words that they used to describe their philosophy and approach. The result is an exploration of photography through the work – and the words – of some of its greatest exponents.

## **The photographers**

The photographers featured in this book represent a wide range of genres, including landscape, portrait, documentary, wildlife, still-life and reportage. They are all photographers whose work I admire, so their inclusion is partly a personal choice. However, it's also true to say that most of them are nationally and internationally recognized as leading photographers in their fields. It was a privilege to talk to them during the course of writing this book. They all offered interesting and illuminating insights, both into their own work and photography in general.

## **The images**

The text on each photographer is illustrated by one of their images that is either representative of their work or gives visual expression to an important idea they discuss. Some of these photographs are iconic and internationally famous and others are less





well known, but all are outstanding or remarkable in themselves. I selected the majority of the images myself, sometimes after lengthy deliberation, and the rest were chosen by the photographers.

Of course, a single photograph can only give the slightest suggestion of a photographer's rich and varied body of work. I'd like to encourage readers to further explore their work, and in turn the fascinating world of photography itself. The book therefore concludes with some biographical notes on the photographers and details of their books and websites.

### **The 100 words**

The 100 key words highlighted in the text are ones that emerged during the course of my interviews. I should make it clear that the chosen words have not been highlighted by the photographers and are not intended to encapsulate their work. Broadly, these words have been chosen because they stood out as significant and identified key aspects of a photographer's motivation, approach, aspirations or working methods. Ultimately, they are also words that shed light on the purpose and meaning of photography itself.

For instance, some said they felt compelled to photograph because of their **fascination** for the subject or to **investigate** a situation. During the process of creating images, one said he felt **awakened**; another experienced **wonder**; another **melancholy**. When discussing working methods one photographer wanted to be **experimental**, one worked in a **surreptitious** way and another used a **subtractive** process to arrive at his final images.

Photographers often had very different ideas about what they wanted to achieve. Some sought to offer an **opinion** or **insight** and others to **celebrate** a place or person, or the beauty of nature. Alternatively, some wanted to raise **awareness** or **provoke** a response and were motivated by **anger** about wars, famines or environmental issues. Others invited us to consider abstract ideas, such as **identity**, **ambiguity**, **irony** or the use of **metaphor**.

Although many of the photographers were very different in their approach and results, and the genres they chose to work within, I found the same kinds of words often re-emerged in different contexts. Several photographers talked about **serendipity** or **luck** when capturing a particular moment or when overcoming a technical **challenge** to create an image. Many wanted to express **empathy**, a **connection**, an **engagement** or a sense of having a **dialog** with a subject. They had a sense of curiosity about the world, they wanted to **explore**, **discover** or ask a **question**.

The only rule I gave myself when compiling the key words was that a word could only be highlighted once, even if also used by another photographer. As you progress through the book, you'll find that these words gradually accumulate. Together they form an admittedly partial, perhaps idiosyncratic, but certainly unique photographic vocabulary and distill something of the essence of photography – in 100 words.





# RENÉ BURRI

René Burri grew up with an insatiable curiosity about the world. He was born and brought up in Switzerland and felt restricted by his country's geography. 'I was always climbing to the tops of mountains and seeing more mountains,' he later recalled. During his art school studies he became conscious of his natural affinity with the camera and realized that a photojournalistic career offered both a means of escape and the opportunity to explore. 'My first Leica became my third eye and through that I could **discover** the world,' Burri says. 'I wanted to investigate every nook and cranny.'

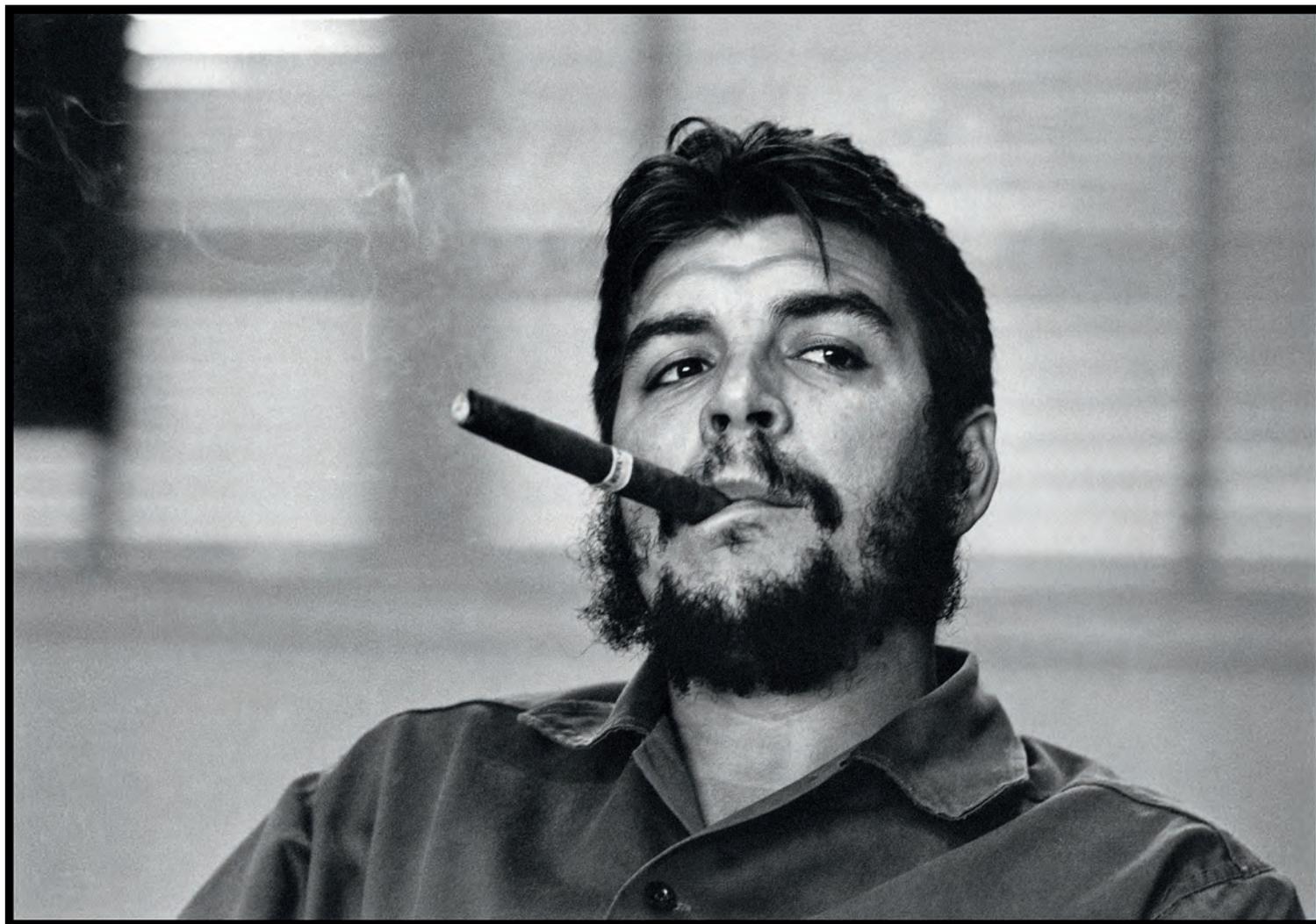
Sometimes his nationality has been a positive advantage. In January 1963, just a few months after the Cuban Missile Crisis, *Look* magazine had arranged an exclusive interview in Havana with the revolutionary leader Che Guevara, then the Minister for Industry and one of the most controversial figures in world politics. A photographer was needed and Burri's reputation, together with his Swiss passport and its suggestion of political neutrality, made him first choice for the assignment.

He found Guevara in a confrontational mood. The blinds were drawn and he refused Burri's request to let in more light. 'Che was like a caged tiger in the office,' Burri recalls. 'He argued with the journalist like cat and dog for over two hours. He ignored me almost completely and I was able to shoot eight rolls of film.' Guevara's vitality and charisma are captured in this image. Its iconic status is ensured by the inclusion of the quintessential Cuban accessory – a cigar.

Burri believes it is vital for photographers to offer their own personal vision of a subject. 'Photography is not simple documentation,' he says. 'Even though it's mechanical, you should use the camera for the **expression** of some kind of feeling – empathy, sympathy, love, hate or whatever it is. And if you don't capture it in the moment, it doesn't get stronger afterwards. While photographing, you have to employ your mind, your soul and your heart.'

...elegy...**discover**...**expression**...**dilemma**...





Che Guevara in his Office | Havana, Cuba, 1963 27





# STEVE McCURRY

Steve McCurry's photography is driven by his love of travel and discovering how other people live. 'At a young age, I decided that whatever I did in my life, I wanted to explore this world we live in,' says the American photojournalist. 'I wanted to wander and observe life, and, for me, the journey is at least as exciting and interesting as the photography.'

During his assignments for *National Geographic* magazine, he often photographs the ordinary people he meets on his journeys around the world. 'I tend to photograph people who have something distinctive or **compelling** about their expression,' he says. 'Many of these portraits are the result of chance brief encounters which lasted maybe a couple of minutes from beginning to end.' The portraits allow his subjects' faces to tell their own story; their strength quietly emerges from the sitter's clothes, expressions or gestures.

What makes a good portrait? 'A good portrait is one that reveals something about a person,' McCurry says. 'If a person has had a hard life, it's usually mirrored in their face. Somehow that fascinates me, that you can see someone's personality or life experiences etched into their features. A good portrait must reveal or give some **insight** into a person's condition, or the human condition in general.'

His 1984 portrait of an Afghan refugee, later named as Sharbat Gula, has become one of the most iconic pictures of the twentieth century. The portrait's impact comes almost entirely from her intense eyes, which seem to reflect the rootless and stressful life she has lived. 'This girl had spent her life in the back of a truck,' he says. 'She comes from a brutal country, yet here's a little bit of beauty in all this devastation.'

In 2002, McCurry was memorably reunited with her, after the portrait had achieved worldwide fame and been shown on the covers of several books and magazines. 'I'm really proud of the picture,' he says. 'Regardless of whether you know the story, the picture still has a power to it. There's a haunted quality, but there's also a beauty about it.'

**...mission...compelling...insight...trust...**





Afghan Girl at Nasir Bagh Refugee Camp | Peshawar, Pakistan, 1984 **63**





### TRENT PARKE (b.1971)

Parke was brought up in New South Wales, Australia. He began photographing at the age of 12, using his mother's Pentax Spotmatic camera. In 2003 he traveled 56,000 miles around Australia with his wife and fellow photographer Narelle Autio. His portfolio of work from this trip was published as *Minutes to Midnight* and won Parke the W. Eugene Smith Grant in Humanistic Photography in 2003. He has also won four World Press Photo awards. He became a full member of Magnum in 2007 and is the only Australian photographer to be represented by the agency. He lives in Adelaide.

**Books:** *Dream/Life* (1999), *The Seventh Wave* (2000), *Minutes to Midnight* (2005).

**Website:** A selection of Parke's work can be seen on the Magnum website, [www.magnumphotos.com](http://www.magnumphotos.com), and the street photography website, [www.in-public.com](http://www.in-public.com)



### MARTIN PARR (b.1952)

Parr's initial interest in photography was encouraged by his grandfather, George Parr. After studying photography at Manchester Polytechnic in the early 1970s, Parr became a freelance photographer. He initially worked in black and white, but started using high-saturation colour film and ring flash in the mid 1980s. This combination gave rise to his signature style. His photographic output has been prolific and his distinctive documentary work has an international reputation. He became a member of Magnum in 1994 and Professor of Photography at the University of Wales in 2004. In 2006 he was awarded the Dr. Erich Salomon Prize for Photojournalism.

**Books:** Parr has produced more than 50 books, including *The Last Resort* (1986), *Bored Couples* (1992), *Small World* (1995), *Common Sense* (1999) and *Think of England* (2000).

**Website:** [www.martinparr.com](http://www.martinparr.com)



### PAOLO PELLEGRIN (b.1964)

Pellegrin was born in Rome and initially studied architecture before taking up photography. He became a full member of the Magnum agency in 2005 and currently works as a photojournalist for *Newsweek* magazine. He has won numerous awards, including eight World Press Photo awards (between 1995 and 2007), a Leica Medal of Excellence (2001) and a Robert Capa Gold Medal Award (2007). His assignments have included documenting conflicts in Lebanon and Kosovo, refugees in Darfur and people living in the slums of Mumbai. He travels on assignment for around 300 days per year and divides the remaining time between Rome and New York.

**Books:** Pellegrin's books include *Cambodia* (1998), *Kosovo 1999–2000: The Flight of Reason* (2002), *Double Blind: Lebanon Conflict 2006* (2007) and *As I was Dying* (2007).

**Website:** A selection of Pellegrin's work can be found on the Magnum website, [www.magnumphotos.com](http://www.magnumphotos.com)





### MARK POWER (b.1959)

Power began his artistic life in drawing and painting, but, inspired by an exhibition of Don McCullin's work, he turned to photography in 1983. He carried out editorial and charity projects until he began teaching in 1992. At the same time, he started working on his own long-term projects and large scale industrial sector commissions. His recent projects have included *A-380*, a book about the development of the world's largest passenger airplane. Power joined Magnum Photos as a Nominee in 2002 and became a full member in 2005. He is the Professor of Photography at the University of Brighton.

**Books:** *The Shipping Forecast* (1996), *Superstructure* (2000), *The Treasury Project* (2002) and *26 Different Endings* (2007).

**Website:** [www.markpower.co.uk](http://www.markpower.co.uk)

### STEVE PYKE (b.1957)

Pyke was born in Leicester, England, and left school at the age of 16 to work as a factory mechanic. He later became involved in the music industry and was the singer in a band. However, he quit the music scene in 1980, initially working as a photographer on style magazine *The Face*. Aside from his professional work, he has carried out a number of self-funded projects, including portraits of astronauts, philosophers and Holocaust survivors. He has worked for a number of leading magazines and in 2004 became a staff photographer on *The New Yorker*. He was awarded an MBE for his work in the same year.

**Books:** Pyke's books include *Philosophers* (1993), *Post Mortem* (2005), *Post Partum* (2005) and *Earthward* (2009).

**Website:** [www.pyke-eye.com](http://www.pyke-eye.com)

### HUMPHREY SPENDER (1910-2005)

Spender was born into a liberal upper middle-class family. Although trained as an architect, he didn't follow the profession. He began shooting documentary pictures, first in the slums of Stepney, East London (1934) and later in Bolton, Lancashire (1937). He joined *Picture Post* in 1938 and was conscripted into the British Army in 1941. By the end of the war his interest in photography was waning and he carried out his last assignment in 1953. He then taught in the textile school of the Royal College of Art until his retirement in 1975. He was awarded an Honorary Fellowship of the Royal Photographic Society in 2005.

**Books:** *Worktown People: Photographs from Northern England, 1937–38* (1982), *'Lensman' Photographs 1932–52* (1987) and *Humphrey Spender's Humanist Landscapes: Photo-documents 1932–1942* (1997).

**Website:** Over 200 of Spender's images are on the Getty Images website ([www.gettyimages.com](http://www.gettyimages.com)). A selection of his 'Worktown' photographs for the Mass-Observation project is online at [www.boltonmuseums.org.uk](http://www.boltonmuseums.org.uk)

