

Tales
of Cyprus
HOME TRUTHS

NUMBER

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CONSTANTINOS EMMANUELLE

Home Truths

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The art and craft of photography is lost

In this age of digital technology and the dreaded 'selfie' – the mystery, magic and wonder of photography may be all but lost. With the advent of 'smart phones' anybody can point and shoot and take countless happy snaps to record important milestones (or more often) – mundane moments in their life. Every waking moment can be captured on a tiny memory-card and unlike analogue technology such as negative film; the act of taking photos is instant and free. Through online sharing sites such as Instagram and Facebook – the proliferation of photos has reached epidemic proportions. Never before has mankind recorded or captured life on this planet on such a scale. Add Photoshop and now we can also manipulate, alter and correct every image we take. Today, we have unprecedented ways of taking photos however; rarely do these images end up printed in family albums or framed on a wall.

I too have been bitten by the digital shutterbug. I must have at least 20,000 photos of my family stored on computers and hard-drives. My intention has always been to print and showcase these images on the walls of my home and office. One day perhaps, I'll get around to it.

I also teach photography to adolescents and young adults. Sadly, when my lesson starts to focus on the fundamentals of good photography such as, composition, lighting, depth of field, framing, viewpoint, exposure and focal point – most of my students let out a collective yawn and become disinterested. The art of photography, the technical know-how is somewhat lost on this 'point-and-shoot' generation. Just like the art of handwriting, many digital natives are ignoring the craftsmanship of yesteryear. I have only one photo of my parents when they were young. Rarely have I encountered a Cypriot family that



possesses more than one or two old photos from the past. That's what makes my exhibition and art project so important. It's more than just archiving these rare and precious photos. When you look at an old photo that was taken in the distant past, there is so much to admire and respect. It's not just the tactile and aesthetic qualities of the paper itself. It's the tonal qualities and the natural ageing and staining of the surface itself. You can't help but admire the craftsmanship utilised by these past photographers at the time. There is an unmatched quality in terms of the way the photograph was

taken and then developed. Each old photo in my collection is a remnant of pioneer technology and a snapshot of Cypriot life and culture. The people in the photos wear the clothing, fashion and styles of their period. For example, many of my distant uncles sported the toothbrush moustache before Adolf Hitler came along and killed off that style forever.

The youngest photographic portrait I have of my father was taken when he was about 28 years old. He looks like a proper gentleman. He looks wise, mature and well groomed. Not a piercing, tattoo or any other socially encourage blemish in sight. If my father was alive today he would grumble about all the trouble I was going to save or resurrect these old photos. "Stop all this fussing and running around" he would say. "They're just old photos." Perhaps it's take a certain person with a certain eye to appreciate these gems.

My search to uncover and reproduce old photos from Cyprus has not been easy. There have been some obvious challenges and constraints. Many of the people I have interviewed for this project have declared that because they had to flee their homes after the Turkish invasion in 1974 all their precious photos were left behind. In other cases, the original photos were often taken by a sibling who decided not to share these photos with other family members. Some photos were lost or accidentally destroyed or thrown away for no good reason. Many photos were damaged due to poor storage.



The most common reason, however, that old photos do not exist today is simply because 60 or more years ago, many people could not afford or simply could not foresee their importance at the time. There were very few photographers on the island of Cyprus and rarely did a member of the community possess a camera.

I look at my 8-year old son with his compact Nikon and he takes more photos in one day that my father took in his lifetime. Truly amazing.

And so my search for these hidden gems continues. I look forward to showcasing what I have found together with the stories behind the people in the photos in my end-of-year exhibition in December this year.

Until then... onwards and upwards!



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