

## Photographer Explains Images of India

Arielle Dollinger | Nov 22, 2010 | Comments 0

Art is personal. It is made up of feelings, thoughts and inner desires that one might not share with the world through a medium other than artwork.

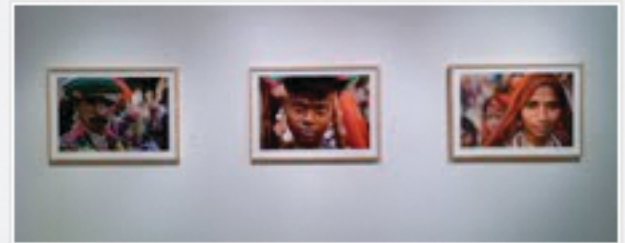
Art affects many, but is subtle enough to cause debate over just what its true meaning actually is.

From Nov. 10 to Dec. 11, the University Art Gallery located in the Staller Center will be home to a collection of photographs taken by Fredric Roberts entitled "Humanitas: Images of India."



This particular exhibition is composed of photographs taken by Roberts during two of his trips to India. On his first trip in 2003, he traveled to Rajasthan, shooting rolls upon rolls of film. His second trip in 2006 took him to Gujarat, where he had the opportunity to take countless digital photographs.

After 30 years of working as an investment banker, Roberts decided to retire from the finance industry to study the exact opposite of his prior focus.



"I spent 30 years doing mergers and financings," Roberts told *The Statesman*. "And I was surrounded by people who had nothing but money. And that was it, nothing but money. And when I go to these third world countries, I'm surrounded by people who have everything that money can't buy."

Roberts explained that the people he meets on his photographic expeditions "have incredible quality of life even though they don't have material things. They care about each other, they have a very strong sense of family."

He continued, saying that they live "in houses with no toilets, no running water, no electricity. But they're very happy with their lives."

His inspiration, he said, is "showing the richness of these people and their lives."

Perhaps the most meaningful aspect of Roberts' work is the fact that he took the time to meet and get to know all of his photographic subjects.

"I don't just go in and stick lenses in peoples' faces," Roberts said. "I find that demeaning and insulting and I don't like to do that."

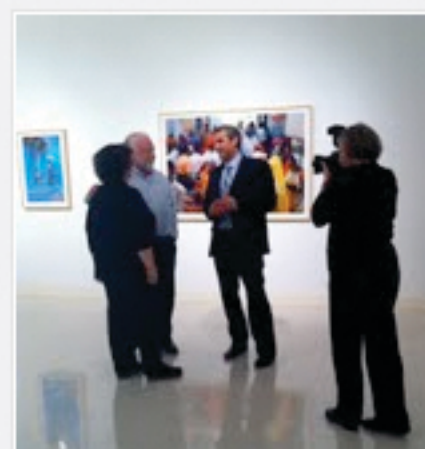
If he didn't get to know a person, he wouldn't photograph them.

To Roberts, each photograph in the exhibition is natural and organic. He set up all the shots by himself. He did not use artificial lighting or flash, but he purposefully captured his subjects in their most organic state.

Roberts said he believes that it is important not to intimidate the subject, especially because the majority of his subjects are not familiar with cameras. He is careful to let his subjects know that he genuinely cares about them and is not there to exploit them or harm them in any way.

Roberts' next project brought him to the Southeast Asian country of Burma, to which he has made five trips over eight years. He hopes that he is finished shooting, but the work is still in progress.

Though Roberts is happy with the end result, he did not assist in the curation of the exhibit. When asked what he thought of his loss of control of the curation, he said that he believes that once a photograph is printed, it no longer belongs to him; it belongs to the viewer, who must decide what it means him or herself.



And so, when someone curates one of his shows, he does not question decisions to enlarge some photographs and to downsize others, or to include certain works and not others.

"My work is all about caring about the people," Roberts said. "If I don't care about them I don't shoot. I just don't photograph."

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