

# Rick Friedlander

## Photo Essay



*A girl is taught traditional Khmer Dance with NGO Krousar Thmey, "The New Family". Run by Cambodians for Cambodians, this NGO gives material, educational and social support that are in harmony with their traditions and beliefs. Their goal is to lead children towards a responsible adult life without dependency.*

**M**Y CAMERA HAS A CONSCIENCE. Very early in my image taking adventures, I began to feel an underlying discomfort when "taking" images of people. It seemed a self-serving act. So, I began a process of introspection, starting to literally look inward as my lens pointed outward. I also started examining how I could bridge the confines of this personal act of creation every time I worked and make it a process that included my subjects, rather than simply capturing them in a frozen moment .

Soon afterwards, I stumbled across a beautiful Polaroid 195 land camera in a flea market in Guatemala. That camera triggered a power-

ful idea. I started traveling with boxes of very expensive Polaroid 665 b&w film. I could now actually give my prints away! I started pulling Polaroids out of the camera and handing them to the kids I photographed, a sort of photographic philanthropy. I learned that through this simple act, my uneasiness regarding the act of "taking" photos had vanished. The "taking" of photos had become a "giving" as well.

I also eventually learned how to become a bit more budget-conscious and now I travel with a much more economical Canon postcard printer.

I have always found myself drawn towards the less fortunate as I travel with my camera.

Typically, I look for NGOs or private organizations that might require assistance to bring their commitment and efforts to light. These encounters have become the highlight of my assignments. It not only imparts to my photography a greater element of purpose, additionally giving me more self-satisfaction, it provides my sub-

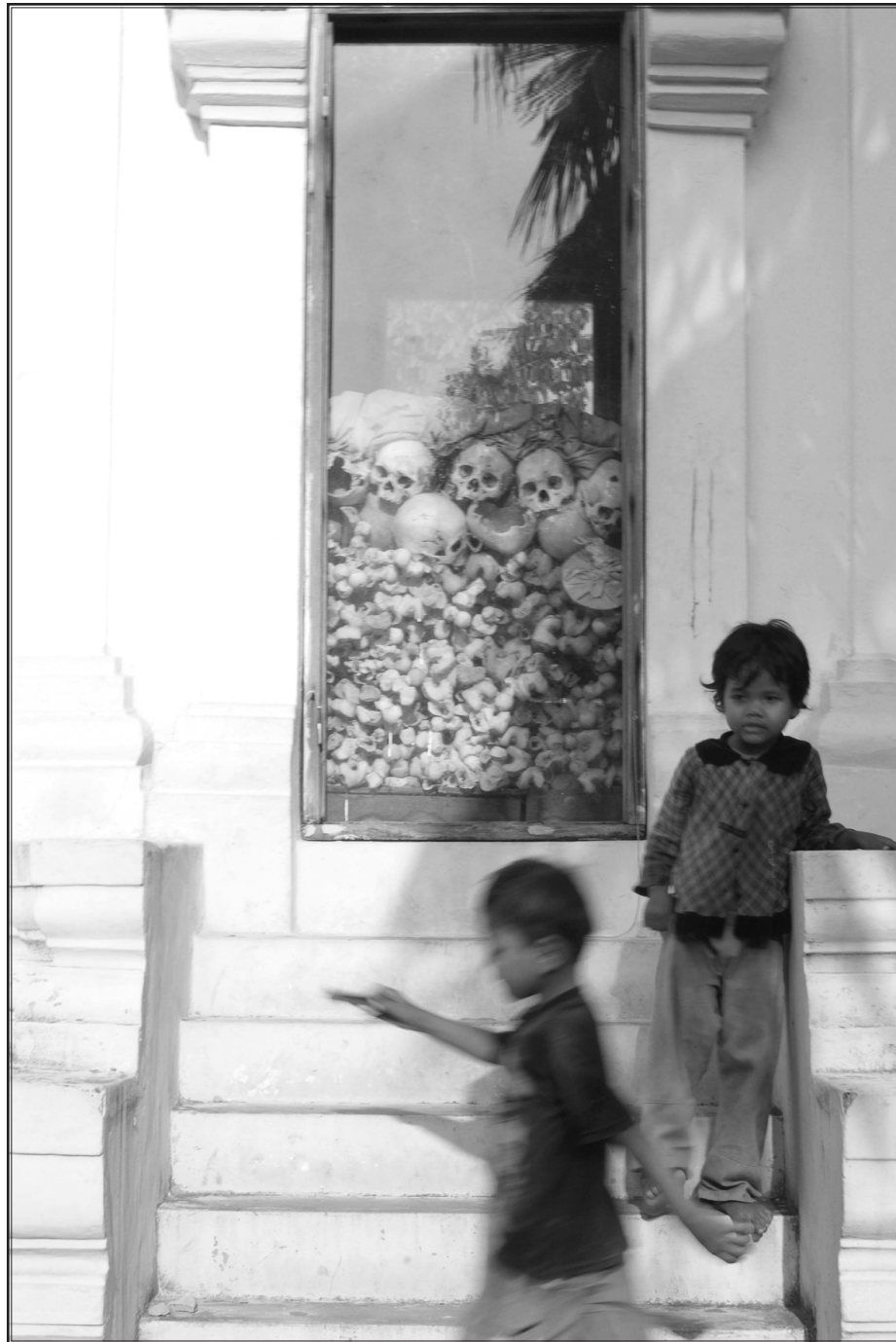
jects a small diversion from their arduous lives.

One day I may be shooting a five star hotel lobby, the next day I am following a street child through the fence of a train station in New Delhi looking for his school adjacent to the tracks. There is a vivid duality involved with my craft of photographing, a give and take with every



*Yanomami boy deep in the Venezuelan Amazon region.*

*Children from the NGO, Salvation Centre Cambodia (SCC), play in front of a memorial dedicated to the victims of the Khmer Rouge at Wat Thmei. The SCC uses the help of trusted local Monks to help support 350 families and 850 children afflicted with AIDS.*



snap of my shutter.

I am always looking to provide my services to any needy humanitarian cause suffering from budgetary constraints. This has become the essential element that fills me with enthusiasm for every assignment.

This small gesture of giving imagery has

made me realize that working with a greater philanthropic bent is the right thing to do. It provides me with a deeply personal and spiritual balance in the photographic process, one linked more to the fundamental concept of shared human dignity than to a simple mechanical act.





*Boys practice the ancient form of Khmer shadow puppetry called “Sbaek” (designated a UNESCO Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity) at a local Wat with NGO Cambodian Living Arts, founded by Arn Chorn-Pond, a Cambodian-American refugee featured in the Emmy nominated movie, “The Flute Player”. He founded this organization to support the music teachers who had helped him survive the genocide of the Khmer Rouge. Music accompanies this puppetry.*

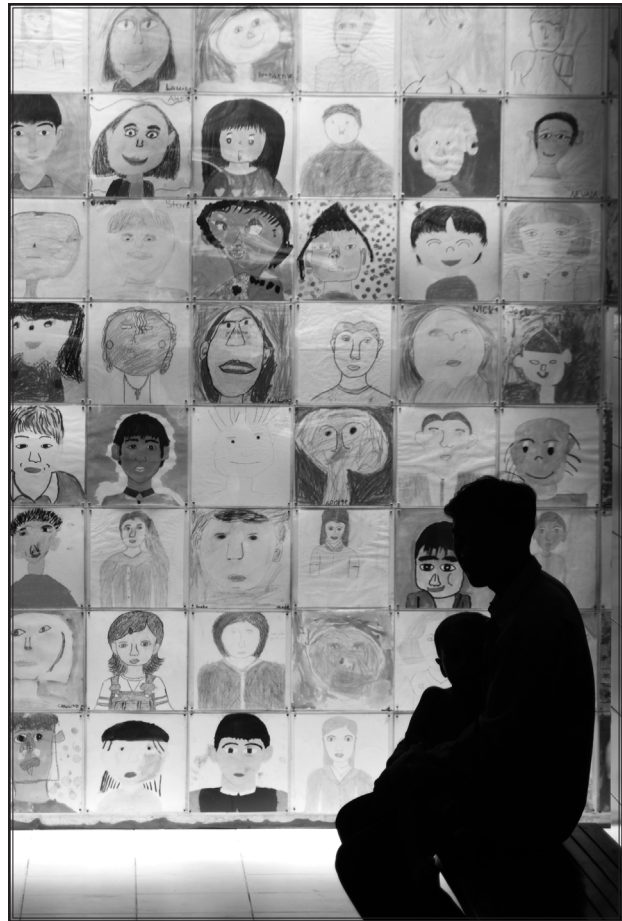
*They perform the Reamker, a Khmer version of the Ramayana. For students, a stipend is provided to attend a public school while they cultivate their artistic skills. Approximately 300 students are supported in Cambodia and are taught by some of the country’s most respected musicians.*



*A girl reflecting at a refuge for orphaned or abused children run by Krousar Thmey*



*A man and his sick child wait patiently in the corridors of the Angkor Hospital for Children. They sit in front of a wall of portraits drawn by children who have visited the hospital.*



*Visit to an HIV/AIDS beleaguered village with the monks of the pagoda-based NGO Salvation Centre Cambodia "SCC". This NGO uses Buddhist monks to earn the trust of the local people for education, support and care. The children are making souvenirs out of coconut shells to sell for pennies to tourists.*





*Canadian nurse David Shoemaker, the Medical Education Center Director and the AHC Deputy Director visit a bamboo shack in 45-degree heat, just a few steps away from the 5 star hotels of Siem Reap. This is the home of a family of young boys who are all HIV positive. The older boys take care of their baby brother. The visit brings much needed food and HIV medicine to keep them alive, not to mention a few moments of laughter and love. After questioning them on the state of their health and the condition of the baby, Shoemaker takes vital signs and records blood pressure, heart rate, weight, etc. Dealing with issues of extreme malnutrition and HIV/AIDS requires consistent follow up.*



*These girls perform a weekly routine for tourists. It is heartwarming to see how sincerely devoted they are to reviving this art form that was nearly lost under the Khmer regime. The Khmer Rouge quashed artistic expression in all its forms during its reign.*

Rick is available for assignment and can be contacted through his website, [www.FriedlanderPhotography.com](http://www.FriedlanderPhotography.com)