

# The Statesman

The Statesman, 21-03-2006

## Who framed Kolkata

Mathures Paul

With every footstep along the dusty roads of Kolkata, a new tale is told, and with every turn one more side to see. Kolkata is a little more than just a crumbling city of palaces. Whether Frank Horvat or Jacek Piwowarczyk, photographers of renown have always made a stopover in Kolkata after picturing the colours of Rajasthan and backwaters of Kerala. After all these years, they still look back in wonder.

Jacek Piwowarczyk

Camera: Canon EOE 5 with Power Driver Booster PB-E2 plus Sigma 24-70mm, 2.8 EX DG Aspherical DF and Canon EF 75-300 f4-5.6 IS USM lenses often with polarising filters. Based in Hong Kong, he concentrates on photographs related to travel, landscape and human photography. Jacek's work has been published in The Guardian, The Observer, The Sunday Telegraph, Daily Mirror, Daily Mail, Evening Standard and countless other publications. Recently he was recognised by Mumbai-based Indian Asian Photography Magazine. "I always thought (and this will not change) that India is the most exotic of all countries and Kolkata is the quintessence of it," he says.

With him photography does not end with the Victoria Memorial or the Howrah Bridge. "Kolkata, like many other Indian cities, has many architectural wonders. But photographers need to consider two aspects before clicking the button — some houses are run down and I am afraid the government has no money to preserve them and secondly, development and modernisation is irrevocable." But life around such buildings is the subject for photographers like him.

Claude Renault

Camera: Carries two Canon EOS 5 D bodies, three zoom lenses, a laptop, and one portable LaCie HD. Apart from a UV filter he doesn't use any other filter. His first journey to Kolkata was in June 2004 when he began writing a book on the Ganges. "I am interested in the relation between the people of the city and the Ganges. When I visit Kolkata, I cannot avoid shooting images of landmark buildings. But my motive is always different. In fact, I travel to India because I enjoy mingling with people."

The photographer from Brittany, now living in Reykjavik, loves to travel and considers India his second home. "For instance, if I shoot an image of a building on MG Road, I want the presence of human beings in the frame. Even a balcony in Kolkata looks nice when some people stand on it."

He is among the growing breed of photographers who have gone completely digital. "With the introduction of full frame cameras from Canon, I use less of film cameras."

Tom Allwood

Camera: Canon digital SLRs.

He spent six months teaching at Mathieson Music School before he began a career in photography. "My thirst to see more of Kolkata is yet to be quenched." True, many old buildings have been demolished, robbing the city of its grandeur. "But many of the buildings have been built upon or adapted rather than knocked down. The city's architecture is multi-layered. It is possible to capture elements from several different eras in a single frame." His most recent exhibition was the Guildford Summer Festival Exhibition in the Lewis Elton gallery at the University of Surrey. In 2004 he won the City Prize in the Insight Guides/Independent on Sunday Travel Photography Competition for a photograph of a street scene in Kolkata.

Frank Horvat

Camera: Canon.

He lived in India for over a year in search of "good stories". During his tour of India, Horvat was fascinated by Kolkata. Most of his photographs were published in magazines such as Picture Post in London, Match in Paris and Die Woche in Zurich. "The most successful of these stories was one about Vinoba Bhave who walked from village to village, preaching non-violence and urging the rich to give some of their land to the poor."

Also known as a fashion photographer, he still loves to be among "normal" people. In a recent interview he said: "Every change of country and language was like discovering a different way of being — that is of being myself. The same is true of my 'periods' in photography — that actually are not 'periods' in time. I keep moving back and forth between directive and nondirective photography, between black-and white and colour, between traditional techniques and digital imaging."