



ALL CREATURES



New Jersey-based photographer Robin Schwartz has been photographing animals for over 25 years now, with two books on the subject already published: *Like Us: Primate Portraits* and *Dog Watching*. “I’m driven, really driven by animals,” she declares. Two years ago, Schwartz brought along her then-five year-old daughter, Amelia, to the backstage area of a circus while she shot adult chimpanzees. Amelia immediately gravitated towards a young chimp named Ricky. “She and that chimp—who was a year younger than her—they loved each other. And I know the dangers of monkeys,” Schwartz says. “They fell off the chair, hugging each other! It was like one of those movies where they run and they fall into each other’s arms—love at first sight! It was a very affectionate moment.” Though primarily a black and white photographer, Schwartz captured the embrace in color. “Somehow,” she explains, “this connection was made.” Her printer, Julie Pochron, edited and enlarged the pictures, a revelatory move that made “the entire project viable,” according to Schwartz. Thus began the Amelia Project, a series of portraits featuring Schwartz’s daughter among animals: surrounded by reindeer at an outdoor petting zoo, cheerfully smiling while being lifted off the ground wrapped in an elephant’s trunk, poised and serene as she is pounced upon by five hairless cats.

It’s not just the humor in juxtaposition that makes Schwartz’s work remarkable: while Amelia is a young girl placed in otherworldly, magical settings, she remains confident, aware, engaged with the camera—the star of one of Maurice Sendak’s stories, made flesh. She is remarkably composed with three baby chickens on her head, manages a look of insouciance while a monkey strokes her ankle—the portraits are as much about the girl as they are about the animals.

“The older Amelia gets, the more interesting she gets,” says Schwartz. “She’s fearless. There are things I’m afraid of. I’m not partial to snakes or insects or to dead things. And she picks up everything! This is nothing that I’ve forced upon her—you can’t force kids to do stuff, they’re sort of like monkeys.”

While much of Schwartz’s earlier work was executed in a documentary style, it’s been her recent trips to the Metropolitan Museum Of Art that have most influenced the composition of her new work. “I love Sally Mann and the light in her work, but I think her light is really painterly, and I connect that to going to the Met and looking at Rembrandt and Vermeer,” Schwartz says. You can easily see the echoes of the elegant, Classical painters in photos like “Two Pink Sphynxes” where Amelia cradles two hairless kittens, the wistful look in her eyes reminiscent of noble portraiture of the 18th and early 19th Century, her luminescent skin and the rich, dark background a nod to the Dutch artists of the 17th Century.

Schwartz is the first to admit the narcissism of shooting one’s own child: “The thing about kids is, I’m only interested in mine,” she says. Yet the indulgent sappiness of “personal photos” never sullies her work. While the series itself is driven by two of Schwartz’s great loves, she maintains a keen eye towards composition and expression, focus rarely blurred by her personal connection to the subjects. This is the work of an artist, not a doting mother. As Schwartz says, “I’m really happy because I think on the inside I’m a frustrated illustrator or a painter. I painted as a little girl, pictures of little girls and animals and monkeys. I haven’t changed at all.” **E**





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The indubitable Amelia, shot by her mother Robin Schwartz. For more: see page 108.

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ALFRED WERTHEIMER
photographer

Assignment:

"A Song In Many Parts"
pg 88

What happened:

The path that led AI to Nina Simone was paved by another American cultural icon, Elvis Presley. "I was friends with the PR lady at RCA Records," recalls AI. "When Elvis was first introduced, she got me involved with him." AI's portraits of Elvis, especially those taken during the "Don't Be Cruel" sessions, helped define the King's image. In 1961, AI's PR friend went on to represent Nina. "I shot her in 1964, at Carnegie Hall," says AI. By remaining relatively inconspicuous around Nina and her family, AI was able to capture the volatile star in strikingly intimate moments. "She wasn't overly anxious to have attention drawn to her, so I tried very hard to blend in without upsetting anyone," he says. "But she was so into her art, you could go right up to her and shoot, and she would barely notice."

Where else you can see his work: *Life*, *Collier's* and *Look*, and on several album covers for Columbia Records.

ROBIN SCHWARTZ
photographer

Assignment:

"All Creatures" pg 108

What happened:

Robin has been a lifelong friend of the fur: "As a kid, I had an instamatic Kodak camera and I dressed up my cat, Whitey, and photographed him," she explains. Schwartz's MFA thesis was on animals, and her book about monkeys, *Like Us*, was dedicated to *both* her cat and her father. At present, she has a nine year-old Whippet named Rebecca, a diabetic 12 year-old Cornish Rex that takes insulin twice a day, a Chinese crested five year-old dog, and a hairless pink Sphinx cat who "needs to be washed twice a week." Schwartz also has a seven year-old daughter named Amelia whom she photographs alongside all these creatures, great and small.

Where else you can see her work: Robinschwartz.net, Tinyvices.com and her books *Like Us: Primate Portraits* and *Dog Watching*

JOSEPH SZABO
photographer

Assignment:

"Jones Beach" pg 114

What happened:

In "Jones Beach" and elsewhere, Joe Szabo's project is to capture the confusing and passionate lives of teenagers—and there's probably nowhere better to find kids than at the beach. Joe has been snapping kids by the sea for more than 20 years, setting up his camera at Long Island's famous Jones Beach. "As much as it's about the kids, it's also about New York City," he says. His photographs chronicle the dizzying changes that have affected the city by documenting its citizens in this most un-urban environment. One can see everything from the luxury of the '80s to the tensions of the early '90s. "There are beaches everywhere," says Joe. "But this beach could only be in New York City."

Where else you can see his work: Michael Hoppen Gallery (NYC), Gitterman Gallery (NYC) and www.photosofteenagers.com

BETH FLADUNG
photographer

Assignment:

"Home Sweet Home"
pg 124

What happened:

For Beth, shooting America's forgotten roadside motels has been a long-term project, not without bumps in the road. Her work often takes her to places where the lady with the camera sometimes sticks out. "I was shooting this dude in Orlando," says Beth. "He had this KKK tattoo on his arm. While I was shooting him I got word that some of the dope boys around were checking me out, and that they were planning on robbing me," she remembers with a chuckle. "Here's this tattooed Klan guy, and I'm the one in trouble!" Dealing with that kind of drama has become familiar to Beth. But she consistently looks for hope. "These people are at the point where they're just trying to make a home," she says.

Where else you can see her work: At the *FADER*-sponsored exhibit at Redux Pictures Gallery (NYC) from May 4th until June 10th, and at www.mosbef.com

CHARLOTTE PLAYER
photographer

Assignment:

"Life After Wartime"
pg 134

What happened:

We first came across Charlotte's work in the phenomenal anthology *reGeneration: 50 Photographers Of Tomorrow*. Charlotte's intuitive sensibility has led her to some volatile locales including Sarajevo (where she shot "Life After Wartime"). But Player doesn't consider herself any kind of thrill-seeker or war photographer. Her photography is a product of her traveling. For the Sarajevo photos, Player was shooting a British band when she came across her vibrant subjects: Sarajevo's youth. "I really got the sense that this was a younger generation that was trying to rebuild the city, not just physically, but psychologically as well," says Charlotte. Her photos capture the process.

Where else you can see her work: Aperture Gallery (NYC) from April 7th until June 22nd, www.charlotteplayer.com

STEPHEN DUPONT
photographer

Assignment:

"Raskols" pg 140

What happened:

Before shooting the photos that make up "Raskols," Stephen Dupont was already an experienced photojournalist, documenting war-torn regions like Bosnia and Rwanda. But for the Australian native, the violent gang wars of neighboring Papua New Guinea hit close to home and his proximity to the conflict gave him an acute understanding of the situation. He considers the "lack of proper education, along with poverty and densely populated living conditions," to be key reasons for the ascendance of gangs in PNG. Stephen's intimacy with his subject resulted in the stunning Polaroid portraits of lives lived on the edge.

Where else you can see his work: *FADER* #20, *The New Yorker*, *Playboy*, *Newsweek*, *GQ*, www.stephendupont.com and in several books, including the award-winning *Fight*.