

John Stewart

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John Stewart, *Ardeko, Cambodia*, 2016, Charcoal print

John Stewart lived a long and fascinating life. Born in London and raised in Paris, he was drafted in the British Army - a six-year stint, of which three-and-a-half were spent in POW camps on the River Kwai, and which he survived thanks to his ability to learn Korean. It was only in 1951, after a long period searching for a career that he discovered photography. He went to New York with shots of Picasso, Matisse and Braque, and attended Alexey Brodovitch's weekly classes.

Brodovitch, art director of Harper's Bazaar and the shaper of photography in America in the mid-20th century, offered him a contract on the condition that he become a "maid-of-all-work" fashion, beauty, portraits, still-life. Once a week Brodovitch gave classes for about 20 professional photographers in Richard Avedon's studio in NY. He was a hard task master and nothing mattered to him outside of talent, imagination and originality. After a grueling apprenticeship Stewart then set up the first of many studios.

In the mid-Seventies, Stewart first abandoned advertising and later editorial work: turning to still-life, he devoted himself exclusively to producing his own images. Paradoxically, his years in Asia greatly influenced both his vision and his travels. Although he works wherever he finds his subjects, he favors the studio with its set space and its controllable light. In these images Stewart strove to 'make' photographs rather than 'take' them and the results are far removed from his photo-journalist roots. Classical, intuitive and imbued with a powerful stillness, he manages to get beyond the surface, transmitting more than just the subject in each photograph.

The Fresson Process: To help him in his quest to 'create' photographs rather than 'take' them, Stewart often used a 19th century process of making photographic prints known as Charcoal Printing. It is still practiced in Paris by the descendants of the inventor Theodore-Henri Fresson and uses pigments rather than silver salts which, according to Stewart, "allow for deep, powerful blacks and a kind of sensuality unknown in conventional painting."

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Solo

Exhibitions

2018

John Stewart: Stillness, Tristan Hoare, London

2016

Adventures of a Footloose Photographer, Galerie Clairefontaine, Luxembourg

2014

Les Véroniques, Anne Clergue Galerie, Arles

2011

John Stewart, Galerie Huit, Hong Kong

2010-2011

John Stewart: A Retrospective, The Wilmotte Gallery at Lichfield Studios, London

2009

John Stewart, Pia Pierre Gallery, Shanghai

2008

John Stewart, Acte 2 Galerie, Paris

2000

John Stewart, Galerie Lambert-Roulant, Paris

1994

John Stewart, Staley-Wise Gallery, New York

1977

Official Portraitist of Muhammad Ali

Group

Exhibitions

2014-2015

Gilles & Boissier: *Morphée*, (Mark Arbeit, George Holz, David Parker, Melvin Sokolsky, John Stewart, Ellen von Unwerth, Albert Watson), Acte 2 Galerie, Paris

1985

Rodin, *John Stewart*, *Duane Hanson*, Jacksonville Art Museum, Jacksonville, Florida

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Permanent Collections

Museum of Modern Art, New York

John Stewart, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

Société française de Photographie, Paris

Contemporary Art Centre, New Orleans, Louisiana

Witty Museum, San Antonio, Texas

Musée Réattu, Arles

Published Works

John Stewart, Retrospective, Verlhac Editions, Paris, 2008

Elephant School, Pantheon Books, New York, 1982

To The River Kwai, Two Journeys, 1943, 1980, Bloomsbury Publishing, London, 1986

Gravitas, Azimuth Editions, London, 1988

Flotsam, Paul Dry Books, Inc, 2010