

RL Fine Arts

Ken Van Sickle - Photographs

The best photography makes us stop and think and look at the world with a renewed sense of who and what we are and what we are capable of. Ken Van Sickle's photographs, from Paris in 1955, and, later in New York, are not only formally and technically masterful, but full of humanity, perception, and the expression of life.

Mr. Van Sickle has been a professional and fine art photographer for more than 50 years. He participated in the "Photography in the Fine Arts" exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, in 1960, the first time photography was shown there, and has a photo in the museum's permanent collection. He has had numerous one-man shows and participated in many group shows including an exhibition in Paris in 2000, in the company of Henri Cartier Bresson, and Robert Doisneau, at Galerie Thierry Marlat. His photographs are in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art as well as many important private collections. He has done two books 'The Lion King' and 'Playing With Fire', based on the works of Julie Taymor. Mr. Van Sickle was Cheng Man Ch'ing's personal photographer and cinematographer from 1968-1975.

As we are now constantly surrounded by photography, it is taken for granted that beautiful photographs are available to us wherever we choose to look. In fact, the ability to photograph and to let the image communicate is not easy and it takes a very special eye and talent. One needs to know or feel exactly what to photograph, whether the image is snapped on the quick to take advantage of a moment, a view, a light or an emotion, or whether it is carefully composed and staged. Great photography communicates directly to us about our world.

Ken Van Sickle went to Paris in 1955 to study painting at the atelier of Andre Lhote, famous for his application of the Cubist style of painting. Soon abandoning painting for which he realized

RL Fine Arts

he had no aptitude, Ken focused on his photography, something that more fully expressed his talent. Adapting his learned experience of the art of painting to his photography, we see images that are fully cognizant of the art of painting: composition, placement, effect, etc. Almost paintings in their thorough composition, they yet have the momentary timelessness that only a photograph can convey as it records a particular instant that nevertheless can resound forever beyond that moment.

Ken spent a year in Paris and fell in love with the city – it shows in these Paris works, where faces and images can belong only to that magical world in the city of light before it strode into our modern world. The images are quintessentially Parisian: the old lady in the café, the two lovers at Select café, the concentration camp survivor now the Peanut Seller. The air and light, etched more sharply within the grainy black and white documentary styling, speaks only of Paris.

The photographs from New York in the 60's and 70's continue this stylistic approach of careful composition and effect, bringing the technique of painting into works such as the Window Dressers at Bergdorf's (with its strong cubist lines), the Shoeshine (the play of light and texture in an almost abstract composition), Trinity (with strong verticals, diagonals and play of black and white). All display a masterful sense of texture and light, placement and framing. More than this, all of these works also show, in ways different to painting, the depth, poignancy and comedy of humanity. They are filled with countless moments and gestures that resonate immediately with our emotions.

One look at the smile on the lady in photo, 'New Year Party' will illustrate exactly this idea. It is to Life!