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Life is an Adventure: Wouter Deruytter

Galeria Omar Alonso is currently presenting an exhibition of black and white photography by Wouter Deruytter, a photographer from Belgium who lives in United States most of the time, although he is usually away, traveling. The exhibition being presented by Omar Alonso is one of the several "adventures" Wouter has lived in recent years: it is titled Arabian Knights, and is a recount of his trips in Arab countries. His vision of the landscapes, the people and customs of the Arabian desert is imprinted in each of the photos that make up this collection. Wouter definitely has the eye of a photographer. He sees photographs coming, and he is ready to capture them. So although it may seem he is only touring with a camera in his belt bag, he's actually hunting for that moment when a great photo will arise. After seeing the exhibition, and being the artistic photograph layman that I am, several obvious questions rang inside my head. How does he approach a shot? Why black and white? How does he choose his themes? Wouter has published, among other works, three books that he considers the most important: *Knights of the Impossible*, *Dreams of Egypt* and *Cowboy Code*. Wouter prefers to work out in the field as opposed to in the studio. He feels working in



the studio means compromising his freedom. "I had a studio for a while" -he says- "but I got trapped in the race to have the latest equipment, the latest technology. Now I only have one camera and one lens... Actually, two lenses, and that gives me a lot of freedom. I don't have a flash, so what I force the film. The few shots that I miss, I can live without." When pursuing a subject

and while is a state of mind. It doesn't show too much, and it is more poetic. The second reason is color tends to fade in time. Black and white is more permanent. How did you become interested in photography? "It happened while attending photography academy in Belgium. I first wanted to make movies. In order to do that, I had to attend the academy, so while there, on one hand, I realized it is very difficult to make movies, and on the other hand, I became interested in photography, so I stuck to it." He remembers not being the greatest of students. "I was the worst. I was not a good student. They didn't like my photos at the school." However, his photos are now in the Modern Art Museum in Brussels. "Yes, it is a nice revenge, to go back to the school and tell them. Remember you didn't like my photos? Well, they are now in the museum." The exhibition will continue at Galeria Omar Alonso. Wouter's books are also available. The gallery has made plans to present a new exhibition of Wouter's photographs next year, to which he completely agrees. We will probably see more big size photographs next year. He is also about to publish a new work on New York City.

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a studio for a while" he says, "but I got trapped in the race to have the latest equipment, the latest technology. Now I only have one camera and one lens...Actually, two lenses, and that gives me a lot of freedom. I don't have a flash, so what I do is I force the film. The few shots that I miss, I can live without." When pursuing a subject theme, he follows a funneling process, where he first takes many photos, and then goes back home and studies them, and sees what he's missing. A second and third trip will produce less, more specific photos. "The last time I went to shoot cowboys, I only took probably ten photos, but they were exactly those I was missing." Wouter chooses black and white for two main reasons: One, black and white is a state of mind. It doesn't show too much, and it is more poetic. The second reason is color prints tend to fade in time. Black and white is more permanent.

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