

STREET LIFE

Photo reporting workshops with Shobha

Palermo in the heart

SEPTEMBER 4 TO 7, 2008

Palermo is crazy, contradictory, melancholy, embittered. Crumbling palaces, bombed during World War II, still stand in the old city centre as if time had frozen the city. Statuesque like women dressed in black sitting on the street doors. Out of time like traditional trades you can no longer find anywhere else, men playing cards, pedlars' carts. Crazy in the alleys of the Borgo you can meet boys strolling with the horses of clandestine races, Mondello's beach is a fun fair, boys play with water pistols around Padre Pio's statue.

Markets in Ballarò and Vucciria burst with colours, smells and tastes of days gone by. Food is everywhere, blooming and lustful, always plenty. Faces are ancient, passionate and lazy like the Arabs'. It's like they always keep something hidden, some mystery beyond the curtain in place of a door to keep rooms fresh.

Palermo is black. Many streets are named after someone killed by the Mafia or are the place of a slaughter.

Things sacred and profane, religion and superstition mix together. Saint Rosalia is everywhere, in homes on little lighted altars by the TV set or carried in street processions with music, fireworks and coriandoli.

The Spasimo is a grand gothic cathedral left without a roof; you discover it in a narrow street in a courtyard you'd never expect. Likewise treasures and luxuriant gardens of noble palaces hide behind ruined facades.

Palermo is mysterious, veiled it won't let itself be discovered all at once but slowly so it always amazes you.

The purpose of the workshop is to develop a project of a photo reportage on Palermo.

Palermo is an ideal place to try your hand at a work project, a concentration of stimuli and stories to follow.

“Street life” means receiving all that happens in the streets and telling it with pictures. Participants should walk alone, in an attentive mood, concentrated and with the camera always at hand. On daily meetings each photographer will get Shobha's advice on every phase of his/her project and compare it with others'.

Each participant will develop a photo project from an individual viewpoint and following his/her own creativity. Palermo will be interpreted through the eyes of each one, so at the end of the workshop we'll have collected several ways to describe a single place. That's why it will be beneficial for everyone to be able to compare his/her final work with that of the whole group.

The teaching method is to let photographers go out independently, as photo reporting is an individual experience, then each picture taken will be reviewed individually with Shobha who will lead and coach teaching and helping individual talents to stand out and take shape.

How the workshop is organised

On the first morning meeting Shobha will introduce the photo reporter's profession, show some of her works, explain the photo reporting language and how a project is started and built. Participants' portfolios (no more than twenty pictures, in digital or printed format, for each participant) will be examined. In the afternoon Shobha will guide the class to visit some interesting places for a photo reporting experience: this will help participants to decide how to set up their own projects.

On the second day photographers will go around alone and identify the work they intend to produce, and on the same afternoon will present their ideas, one or several proposals. Once a final decision is made, following Shobha's advice, each participant will start shooting pictures, and review them with Shobha.

The whole third day is devoted to taking pictures and developing the photo reporting project. Shobha will be available throughout the day for suggestions or any help. The work done will be reviewed individually at the end of the day.

On the fourth day pictures will be selected and edited. Shobha will oversee each work through all its phases. Each photo reportage, well structured with an opening, a choice of pictures and a script with explanations, will ultimately be presented to the group. A group dinner will close the workshop.

Shobha's assistant will help with research and any technical or practical issues. Each participant will receive a street map of Palermo highlighting places of special interest and all useful information.

During the second half of the workshop more and more time will be spent on selecting and editing pictures, fundamental steps in a photo reporter's professional growth and in developing a project.

There will be a meeting with Letizia Battaglia too, who will tell her own experience as a photo reporter in Palermo during the years of the "mafia war" and her relationship with the city.

The workshop includes all the main phases of a photo reporting project starting with an initial overview of Palermo. As usual with newspaper orders it will be essential to be able to make an effective synthesis and get organised in the short time available. Other major aspects are the ability to manage shootings individually and to interact with people and places, to select pictures and put them in a meaningful order, to choose an opening, to write a script and present the final project.

General information

Travelling, lodging and meals are not included in the fee of the workshop.

In order to participate it is sufficient to have a digital reflex camera and basic skill. Participants are encouraged to carry along their own portable PC's with all the equipment for digital pictures.

Participants are expected to send in advance, via e-mail, a brief CV explaining the level of their photographic knowledge and if possible a portfolio.

Advice will be provided for safe and convenient places to stay.

For information and registration, please send an e-mail to workshop@motherindiaschool.com or get in touch with Anna Bernasconi (cell phone +39 3396746218)