

FOUNDERS' STORY - 05/10/18

Journey to the Dark Side

WRITTEN BY CHRISTY CHIU

Known around the world for his dark and beautiful images, legendary Magnum photographer Antoine d'Agata tells us why, for him, chaos and conflict provide the answers.



The maverick French photographer Antoine d'Agata is known for his powerful, intimate images of the darkest elements of humanity. With work seen in exhibitions around the world, he has travelled far and wide in search of the world's conflicts and life's outcasts, determined to focus his lens on the stark reality that faces those rarely given centre stage. This month, he has an exhibition at [Charbon Art Space](#) in Hong Kong, where he's also teamed up with French director and actor Fabrice Michel for *Odyssea*, a stage play inspired by D'Agata's words. He sat down with us for an informal conversation in a stranger way: in the fire escape in an old industrial building as he explains why, for him, beauty lies on the dark side.



Born in Marseille in 1961, Antoine D'agata grew up leading a life surrounded by gang violence, political riots, drugs and prostitution. Motivated by his political activism and a desire to experience things from within, he left France in 1983 to travel relentlessly, traversing the world from Central America to Cambodia and endless places in between in search of conflict and chaos. "From 17 to 37, I would go anywhere where wars and revolutions were, this kind of chaos was in my life. This mix of violence and politics helped to shape who I am today," he says.



Antoine took up photography in the early '90s, studying at the International Center of Photography in New York, where his teachers included Larry Clark and Nan Goldin. It was all part of a quest to become more than just an observer, "photography has been a medium to help me be closer to life and to be inside my world in a more intense way," he explains. In 2004, he joined the renowned international photography agency Magnum, where his work was catapulted onto the global stage – he has also published over 12 books and exhibited in galleries from Paris to London and Hong Kong.

Reputed for his uncensored documentation of topics normally considered to be taboo including prostitution, drugs and the often hidden aspects of human nature, his images are unflinching and impossible to ignore. "I document the violence of the world in many different ways," he explains. "It's part of me and I'm part of it." Alongside shining a light on the darker corners of life, his images also highlight the inner strength he finds in his subjects. "For them, every day is a battle, a war. Despite the torment, each of them still fights their fight to the end."

This May, Antoine has brought his perspective to Hong Kong, not only in an exhibition but also as a performance in his written play, *Odyssea*. Working with director Fabrice Michel, the latter has brought his words to life in a live performance that aims to experience for themselves Antoine's extraordinary way of seeing. As the legendary photographer himself puts it, we are all obliged 'to understand the world better, criticise it, strive to change the context that we live in; and then invent our own way of existence, rather than living complacently.' If you're keen to explore more, then look to his exhibition and play for inspiration on just that.

Details

Contamination

Solo exhibition of Antoine D'Agata

Date: 29 March to 25 May 2018

Time: Tuesday to Saturday 1pm – 7pm

Price: Free

Address: Charbon Art Space, 8/F Sing Tek Factory, 44 Wong Chuk Hang Road, Aberdeen, Hong Kong

www.charbonartspace.com

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