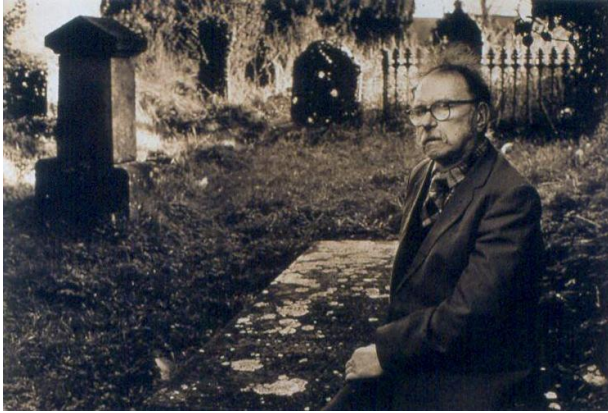


Basic Detail Report



Poet in a Medieval Churchyard (A Special Place)

Date

1989

Primary Maker

Minihan, John

Medium

Photograph

Description

"'Ever - the human document to keep the present and future in touch with the past." Lewis W. Hine

Photographic documentation has had many crusaders. Lewis Hine captured it with his views and feeling for the Labour movement in America. As indeed did Edward S. Curtis with his love for the culture of the North American Indians. If I had a particular influence in photography it was Curtis's photographs. Working as a photo-journalist on the London Evening Standard there is a fundamental difference between what I am as a press photographer and what I achieve as a documentarian of my hometown, Athy in Co. Kildare. Athy is now becoming part of Dublin suburbia. It was unthinkable back in 1961 that someone could live in Athy and work in Dublin. Now with the motorways Athy is less than an hour's drive from the capital; people work in Dublin, get their videos in Dublin and return to Athy all in a day's work. There seems to be little of the social intercourse that was apparent to me - but why should there be - no one should stand still. Back in 1977 when I photographed "the wake of Katy Tyrrell", a ritual that lasted two nights and three days, it was to be the last of its kind - there has never been a wake like it since. A decade later concrete funeral parlours seem to be the preference. My photographs help capture a generation. In 1984 while on assignment in Belfast for the Evening Standard I met Brian Keenan who this year (1989) will have been held captive in Beirut for over three years. Brian introduced me to the Belfast poet Padraic Fiacc whom he knew because he had done a thesis on his poetry, while a student. Since then Padraic Fiacc and I have become good friends. Over the years I have talked to Padraic about Athy and my photographs, and this year I invited him to spend some time in my hometown. One picture that I took of Padraic in St Michael's medieval cemetery is my contribution to the exhibition A SPECIAL PLACE. I have titled it "Poet in a Medieval Churchyard" for it shows the peace and tranquillity far removed from the bleak pessimism of Padraic's poetry of his troubled province. I have always tried to steer clear of the thick-mick images some photographers keep assaulting us with. Most people in my photographs have names, because I believe it is the people that give a town its character. Although I keep returning to Athy it has become more difficult to see random moments that will make a picture. I believe that my pictures of Athy have to be viewed as a

sequence of events that tell a story. It was easier for me taking pictures in the sixties and seventies, as the local people knew me as Jack who came back with his camera. I was not a stranger, or as the locals say a 'blow-in'. When I arrived in Athy I had come home." John Minihan

Dimensions

Object: 33 × 49 cm