

Ralf Obergfell.

London-based photographer Ralf Obergfell spent several months at the end of last year living with sea gypsies in South-East Asia. When the tsunami struck he was fishing at sea in a tiny boat. "It was only because of the skill of the sea gypsy I was with in handling the boat that we survived," Obergfell recalls. It was, understandably, a life-changing experience.

Since returning to London Obergfell has given up his job working as a new business manager in a graphic-design company to concentrate on his real passion—photography. Obergfell has been taking photographs since he got his first camera as a child but really began taking his art seriously a few years ago. "I'd describe a lot of what I do as travel photography and portraiture," Obergfell explains, and his travels have seen him document people and environments both far away (Thailand, Malaysia, Borneo and Spain) and nearer to home. His adventure with the sea gypsies is destined to become a book and exhibition this year. Another ongoing project is a series of photographs taken over the last three years documenting and celebrating the soon-to-be-extinct London Routemaster buses. "Seeing those red buses was a big part of what drew me to come to London from Germany thirteen years ago," he says, "and I've been here ever since."

Obergfell's poetic travel photography is infused with subtle drama and has a spontaneity that makes its finely balanced composition seem apparently effortless. His portraiture, on the other hand, appears meditative, like long, drawn-out moments of stillness in film. In these images, Obergfell experiments with light, mixing natural light with hidden sources such as torchlight and the light from slide projectors to create the suggestion of a sense of place and hints towards a narrative dimension to the otherwise stark images.

As well as pursuing his own projects, Obergfell is a key member of Photodebut, a collective of photographers working and exhibiting together and promoting their art through books, exhibitions and projects. The group also conducts a lecture programme, visiting photography students in London, and has also run workshops for children and local artists. Obergfell's Routemaster project (a collaboration with Photodebut's Jet) is now in its final stages and he is currently busy raising funding for the book. Meanwhile, the sea gypsies are calling, and the next excursion to South-East Asia is being planned.



Talent

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London-based photographer Ralf Obergefell spent several months of the end of last year living with sea gypsies in South East Asia. When the business struck, he was fishing or sea in a tiny boat. It was only because of the skill of the sea gypsies I was with in handling the boat that we survived. Obergefell recalls. It was, unquestionably, a life-changing experience since returning to London. Obergefell has given up his job working as a photography business manager in a graphic-design company to concentrate on his real passion—I do as travel photography and portraits. Obergefell explains. He describes a lot of what he has seen him document people and environments both in Thailand, Malaysia, Bolivia (and Spain) and nearer to home. His adventures with the sea gypsies is destined to become a book and exhibition this year. Another ongoing project is a series of photographs taken over the last three years documenting and celebrating the season to harvest London Routemaster buses. "Seeing those red buses was a big thing for me to come to London from Germany thirteen years ago," he says. "I've been here ever since." Obergefell's poetic travel photography is infused with subtle drama and has a spontaneity that makes his travel photography is a series of photographs taken with hidden sources such as flashlight and the light from mobile phones to create the stark images. Obergefell's meditative, like long, drawn-out moments of a collective of photographers working and exhibiting together and promoting these art through books, exhibitions and projects. The group also conducts a lecture programme in its final stages and he is currently busy raising funding for the book. Meanwhile, the sea gypsies are calling, and the next excursion to South East Asia is being planned.

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