

A few memorable words...

It is the strangest thing when memory becomes distant, as if it belongs to somebody else. One recognises the past memory as one's own, but it feels as if the mind has been amputated. The uncertainty between past memory and present reality has become increasingly stronger for me as the years have passed from the time I left my native land to come and live in the UK. The moment of change now feels like the missing link from a chain used to hold the anchor that ties one's cultural and historical traditions. Instead of the rather hitherto superficial understanding, deeply rooted from my formative years, now, it is as if different eras of history and culture - as pieces of a puzzle - formed a new picture, and new questions have emerged. Has everything been a myth? Is there any connection between the past and present? To which world do I belong? Should I be a part of either world and why?

Over a period of ten years I have been visiting places in Greece connected with strong memories from childhood to early adult years. I tried to photograph images that would bridge the past and the present, the old and the new culture. The images were created by two major influences. First by deliberately visiting places with past memories looking for marks, signs, changes, or feeling the atmosphere, absorbing new sounds, touching things, and looking at people's faces with the hope of recognition. Secondly by coming across any situation that triggers a memory, and that could be anywhere. Quite often the romantic and nostalgic elements were overpowering, and attempts to connect them with contemporary time were visually and mentally challenging. I had to follow the influences from my memories because it was quite clear to me that the photographs I was taking were not for me to make a point, tell a story or document a theme. After many visits and photographs I was hoping that I would come to some conclusion, an outcome, an answer to a question that I hadn't asked yet, but I was hoping that at some point it would emerge.

The feeling of the unknown was fascinating - of what the memory would bring, what lay ahead at the next town, village, street, the turn of a corner, what a quarter of a century's absence had done to a place. Quite often the anticipation to get there created a wave of uncontrollable emotions, from happiness to disappointment. The work was completely unpredictable. The best feeling ever!

It was easy to understand that the memory was responsible for the choice of a place, or an external influence was responsible for triggering the past, but the decision of what to photograph, more than often had its base in cultural influences from my new found life. Without doubt I had developed a new way of seeing, understanding, and questioning cultural elements which in the past I would have ignored or dismissed as the status quo. Everything was open to questioning and criticism, and at that point my early memories felt distant, that they were somebody else's, - they almost felt foreign, belonging to another me.

Every time I pointed my camera to take a photograph, I was actually pointing it at myself. Every time I was photographing things connected to my memories, questioning and criticizing cultural and historical elements, I was reassessing myself. Whatever right or wrong I had done was there, in front of me, it was time for me to face it. Perhaps like a pain that needs a painkiller, my early memories needed the distance and the feeling that they were not mine until the time came to confront them. The images that have come out of this experience are not photographs of or from Greece. They are fragments of memory from a world that I used to be a part of, they are strong statements of an irreversible change, a combination of past and present, the understanding of my new self.