

California best friend Simon Jones interviews Art Photographer Joey Miller:

" Ok, Joey, tell me how it began : "

" Somehow, I knew what I wanted to do. About twelve my father bought me my first photography camera as a birthday gift. I started learning the basic technics by myself. He was a professional photographer and helped me, gave me lots of tips. At home, I built my own lab, developed analog film, did black and white pictures for friends and family.

About 19 Years old, I tried to get into newspaper and magazine photo business. I sold some scenic Berlin City pictures to a local daily newspaper and did some of the City of Paris, France, which were printed in several weekend paper editions.

Besides, I also had the opportunity to do some LP cover and tour photos for a German Band named >Messerschmitt <."

" What were your next steps ? "

" After finishing German Abitur at Age 19 I decided to learn the Photographic and Film theory and praxis at the Berlin still photography and camera operator school and additionally at the Free Berlin University.

After a 3-year study, I became a certified assistant camera operator for film. Even before I got my Examination Paper, Berlin Public TV network SFB hired me for my first job. Not really lucky there I joined ZDF, Germans 2nd Public Television network five month later.

They hired me for many interesting jobs in European cities like Paris, Lisbon, Madrid, Rome and even a one-month trip to the middle east, where I assisted camera operator Harry Erben in a documentary for ZDF. Besides, I shot many still pictures from the people and the country. My assistant career topped in working with famous German film camera operator C.F. Hutterer, who, after 2 successful docs, asked me for another TV documentary, this time in Mexico.

However, I decided to quit because of personal differences.

Four years later, I became a documentary camera operator myself and worked for several German TV Stations and private TV-Production Companies.

I didn't feel good to get too tight to only one company, so I worked as a freelancer. But I always kept an eye on the still photography."

" You told me, your travelling around the world was very important for your personal growing. "

" Yes, that's true. In 1979 I decided to travel the United States for the first time, alone by myself. I bought a stop-over flight from Berlin to New York City and then to San Francisco. In New York I rent a little room at the YMCA, 44th floor. Never been that high in a building. I walked half Manhattan like a pioneer, by feet, subway and bus, couldn't get enough of it.

Five days, every minute. First time in NYC, my eyes were big open. I even booked a helicopter flight, then walked Central Garden weekend, south ferry crossing and WTC sightseeing from the top. Nearly 1,300 feet high. People looked like ants from the viewing area.

But somehow, I felt lost in between the huge city.

Arriving in San Francisco by 747 PAN AM plane, my adventure continued. I bought myself a metallic golden Dodge station wagon for 300 Dollars, to travel the States by car. It was about 220 000 miles old.

I used the car like a mobile home, to spare some money. The space in the back was big enough to put a double foam bed in. And where the spare tire should be, I put my clothes and some kitchen stuff. Just a big American Car. What else. I really loved the sound of the eight."

“ How about your experiences : ”

“ It was the time I became aligned to the Country and the American people I met. Some really helped me, maybe they don't know until today.

An example: Once I drove my Dodge near a fantastic natural sight. Huge redwood trees around, a wild river beneath a gravel field, nature at its best. And a nice place to park the car overnight.

You must know, I'm more a countryman, I love our planet earth.

Next morning I got wet feet stepping out of my so-called mobile home. The river had taken back his place. Without making any noise. I was nearly lost, all wheels completely river flooded, the heavy car sinking into gravel ground. What to do?

A near by passing young farmer saw the careless guy, came over and asked, if he could help. What a question! Sure - and what he did. He drove back to his farm to get a bigger chain and towed my car out of the riverbed. Even his truck had a tough work to do. Well done and both man were satisfied.

It was just another lesson to learn about living together on earth. Even with strangers. My mind changed without recognizing. Traveling could be like school.

It is a kind of seeking. In the beginning you don't know about, you just travel. Curious as a child crawling the fresh springtime garden for the first time. When you've seen enough fresh garden in the world, you probably find out, you were only seeking yourself.

But that could easily take about a lifetime.

Years later, after traveling half the world, I learned the message.

Especially in the deserts of Nevada or Utah, Arizona and Texas, one can find himself. I walked the hot sand and rocky land and found beautiful new views of the world. And real true calm places, where one only hears the blood flushing in his own head. The desert has no sound but silence. Once I camped a whole week in the desert, at the same spot, alone by myself.

Three month experience on US roads, no clock, no TV, no phone, no need to go somewhere special. Almost everyday in the morning I decided if I like to drive and where or not. I put the map on the hood, my breakfast too and checked my way.

This trip I did a big loop, starting from San Francisco up North on Road No.1 to Portland, Oregon, then to the East visiting Yellowstone Park, Wyoming, then down Salt Lake City, thru Utah to Canyonlands National Park, Colorado River until Grand Canyon, Las Vegas of course, Phoenix and Tucson Arizona, down to the Mexican border. West to San Diego, up to Los Angeles and after 9000 miles back to San Francisco, where I sold the car. I had a Rand McNally Road Atlas and the freedom to go where I want. And besides, I shot many analog pictures there.

“ I remember you told me that was not your only trip to the States ? ”

The '79 USA adventure was too exciting for me. After 2 years working in Germany, I decided to do it again. In 1981, I got back and did nearly the same trip. This time starting in NYC with a greyhound bus, crossing the country to the west, all the way to San Francisco. In one bus, same seat, no engine stop, only the driver changed. Three days and two nights. The bus stopped every couple of hours at a station to catch new travellers.

Arrived in Frisco, I bought a used station wagon, now for 900 \$. It even was a Dodge again. Golden metallic colour. Newer and in nicer shape than the first one. Put a foam in the back and starting the ride once more. Home again.

This time equipped with a better technical photo camera and lenses I travelled again to Canyonlands National Park, to a beautiful place I was before.

My reason was to catch a `79 made photo in better quality. In my hand the `79 made photo, I walked and searched the bright canyon about a day. But I did not find the scene and the dried dead tree, I had photographed two years ago. I felt disappointed and really sad.

Years later, I understood the hidden meaning of this second US trip: There is nothing on earth, we can repeat. No rollback of the time and do it again. No moment, no feeling, no nothing. Everything is past when it happens. To accept this, helps us overcome the sadness we sometimes feel about our past. It's like it is.

So I drove along the Colorado River to the rocky deserts of Nevada, visited famous colored Bryce Canyon, once again Grand Canyon, this time North Rim, checked out Las Vegas for a game and a free breakfast and later down to Texas.

At the end of the trip, I crossed the US backwards, about 2,500 miles all the way to the east. Ending in Baltimore, Maryland, where I sold the car for 600\$. To a young photographer, who needed a big car just to tow his boat.

“ What were your next steps on your road ? “

Ok, reaching Age 32, I did documentaries as a camera operator for the German Lufthansa Airline around the world, i.e. in London, Paris, Rome, Venice, several times to NYC, Utah, Niagara Falls, , California, San Francisco, LA, Las Vegas, Alaska, Florida, Canada, Bangkok, Japan's Tokyo and Kyoto, to name a few.

I had the luck to work while traveling or travel while working. It was an amazing time of my life. I learned a lot about people, countries and myself. Lufthansa arranged and helped with hotels and overweight baggage. That was quite comfortable. Especially in Thailand. After two years I quit, because I became tired of it all. Burned out. No more planes and Hotels please. I needed to stay at home for a while.

Some jobs only in Germany and a couple of years later, I learned to handle TV studio cameras and worked for German ZDF and other TV stations as TV Studio camera operator. I did lots of Music Shows and Sport Events all over Germany, some in Europe.

In the middle of 1995, I joined the German TV WDR Rockpalast Team (www.rockpalast.de). Over the years, I've been on stage with many famous Musicians and Rock Bands like Santana, Simple Minds, INXS, David Bowie, Steve Winwood, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Deep Purple, Eric Burdon, Led Zeppelin, Robin Trower, etc.

Ok, only as a camera operator for WDR Rockpalast TV.
It was like a child's dream come true : My favorite music.

I also shot Concerts like Rock am Ring, legendary Loreley Open Air Festivals and even until today the spring and autumn WDR Crossroads Festivals in Bonn at the Harmony Club (www.harmonie-bonn.de).

For other German TV Stations I did Michael Jackson in Munich, Pink Floyd in Pennsylvania, and many more.

Another lifetime dream came true when I was hired for a Rolling Stones Concert in Bremen in 1998 as hand held camera operator, front of stage. Dierks TV Company hired me for that gig. I was glad they didn't know that I would have paid for that job ! I'm an addicted fan of the group. We had Champagne after the show and well payed. Thanks to Dierks TV.

" So how come that you are in photography again ? "

Ok, even while earning my living from working as a camera operator, I never lost my passion for the still photography. As a cameraman I had received my goal, so around 2004 I slowly switched back to photography. But not into the stuff I did before.

Because in the meantime, digital revolution had changed the photography world completely. I learned working with computers and graphic software including Photoshop and others, bought myself a digital compact, then a digital reflex camera with some nice lenses, especially a macro.

I checked what was possible and concentrated my view still on nature photography. But not the landscape scene anymore, more to unusual perspectives of close angles. Into the world of tiny colorful secrets.

In October 2006, I helped a friend to sell her house in Portugal, about 200 km south of Lisbon. One day I walked to the beach for relaxing and suddenly found an interesting world of stone and water. Just by accident.

Along the Atlantic coast huge rocks fell into the ocean. Beautiful colors and interesting structures of stone found my interest. The more pictures I took, the more I got clinked to them. A new world opened in front of my eyes. I had a laptop with me, so I could check the pictures every evening. This was a new beginning.

"But you are no more into pictures of stone, as one can see."

In November 2009, I travelled to this place again. Now for the fifth time. The digital camera gave me much more opportunities to take completely new pictures than ever. Most helpful is the possibility to see a picture right after the click. A second later I can change the angle a bit or try a different distance. I like the immediate control. Most of my photos would be impossible to catch with analog cameras.

At time, I developed my own technics of shooting water, sun reflections and colored stone. Experiencing with different shutter speed, manual focus and exposure settings for unusual results.

But image capture is only part of the image forming process. The Computer makes it also possible of developing RAW Photos and that gives a Photographer the overall control about the digital picture. I've got the power of post processing everything by myself. This is fantastic.

Being my own lab again, but much more powerful. I can slightly match the color, cut edges, crop the pix for better results and check it the same moment. What a difference to the former analog world.

Most of my pictures are not digitally manipulated, I did not change the original photo, it's only a little enhancement of what is. You'll find them in Gallery One and Two. Gallery Three is more computer aided work based on real digital photos. Hope you like my work.

Some more I'll like to say:

It's like I found a new world in a world which I thought I knew a bit. But our planet is so fantastic and there is so much we are not able to see with our own eyes. Macro photography opens my horizon, showing me more and more the sometimes hidden Beauty of our Planet Earth. The deeper I dive into this world the bigger grows my respect.

Some Words about my Pictures

I don't wanna say too much about my pictures. We live in an overflowed Media Century. Every picture is described to us, everything must be explained, even when it is not necessary.

As if we lost the ability to see by ourself.

On TV, they even determine our emotional feelings, when they decide when we should laugh. What can be more restrictive ?

I showed my art work to many people, once at a little exhibition. People asked me why, where and how I did this and that. I told them a bit about my photos but I think it made no big difference. For me taking photos is an intimate procedure. Not something to talk about.

One can tell a story, a picture is the story.

While taking pictures I need to be alone. There is a close connection between my feelings and the world around. It is only me and the nature. It is close to diving under the water. There are no words to explain. This moment and later too. There is no reason, it's just my way to express myself. It's like playing again by myself - in my sandbox.

In addition I found out, it's better to say nothing to the viewer. Even a title gives our brain a direction, a path to think. When there is nothing written, only the picture before our eyes, we are able to let our feelings interpret.

That's why my photos carry no titles, only numbers. To give you the free flow of your imagination and your unpredicted fantasy.

I prepare for an German Art Exhibition in the near future. Hopefully USA too. Sorry for the watermarks if they disturb, there is too much web piracy.

Joey Miller

