

The Magazine for Emerging Photographers and Photo Educators

BROUGHT TO YOU BY PDN AND NIKON

pdnedu

www.pdnedu.com

Volume 3, Issue 2/Fall 2004



inside the advertising world

WE SHOW YOU WHERE THE JOBS ARE

little gems

GREAT GRAD PROGRAMS
YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF

innocence found

LORETTA LUX AND HER MYSTERIOUS
WORLD OF CHILDREN

onetowatch

The kids are most definitely not all right—and that's the way photographer Loretta Lux likes it.

By Anthony LaSala

If the children in Loretta Lux's photographs cannot see dead people, they must, at the very least, possess extraordinary paranormal capabilities unknown to the rest of us.

At least that's the rumor.

Mixing the nostalgia of childhood with an uneasy sense of the supernatural, Lux's digitally composed images of youth appear like Sears studio portraits of Rosemary's Baby after a few years of coddling by the cult. In a word, they are bizarre. But there is more to Lux's photographs than inherent peculiarity. They are visually addictive. You can't stop wondering about the stories behind these children. You can't stop staring at their outfits, their environments, and, most importantly, their heavy, forlorn eyes. And if the sales at Lux's gallery (Yossi Milo in New York, where she sold out her recent show) are any indication, there are hundreds of viewers who want to keep staring—in the confines of their own homes.

Born in Dresden, Germany, and currently living in Ireland, the 35-year-old Lux was originally trained in painting at the Munich Academy of Art. She didn't pick up a camera until after she graduated in 1996. "I had never taken a course in photography or assisted anyone. In fact, I knew nothing about photo technique," says Lux, who mentions the painters Francisco Goya, Agnolo Bronzino, Caspar David Friedrich and Philipp Otto Runge as influences. "I have a great love for paintings, but I found that I didn't necessarily need the physical process of painting. I know that many painters particularly enjoy the physical aspect, and they wouldn't want to miss it. But it was not so with me. I didn't like pushing paint around. I like it clean."

Lux's first experiments with the camera came in 1999. She started with self portraits before moving on to children. But her background with the brush stayed with her. She uses her own paintings, as well as her own past photographs, as backdrops in her current images. Using several Nikon digital cameras, a PC, elaborate studio lighting, and the "visually fascinating" children of friends or models, she shoots the portraits that she later places digitally onto the backgrounds. "My technique is complicated," says Lux, who demurs when asked to reveal specific techniques. "One single image takes about two months



All images © Loretta Lux

loretta lux



All images are Ilfochrome Prints © Loretta Lux/courtesy of the artist and Yossi Milo Gallery

Above: "The Walk," 2004, 19" x 23"

Left: "Yanan," 2004, 19" x 25"



Top: "Marianne," 2004, 25" x 19"
Bottom Left: "At the Window," 2004, 19" x 19"
Bottom Right: "Study of Boy 2," 2002, 19" x 19"

All images are Ilfochrome Prints © Loretta Lux/
courtesy of the artist and Yossi Milo Gallery

to finish, and I enjoy the process immensely."

Lux's photographs delve into notions of childhood, the unfolding story of growing up and "the discovery of self and the equivocal connection between self and world," as she puts it. The latter exploration clearly reflects her admitted photographic influences—Jeff Wall, Cindy Sherman, August Sander and Diane Arbus. But it is the intrinsic mystery in the images that separates her work from that of Sander and Arbus. And it is the sentimentality coating her abnormal creations that separates her from Wall and Sherman. "Most people gravitate toward the images and express an unsettled feeling initially," says Milo, the person who, according to Lux, turned her career around. He discovered her work at a 2003 group show at the Centro de Arte de Salamanca in Spain, and featured her in a group show and solo exhibition soon after. "But I believe that people recognize something about themselves in the work."

Of course it is that personal suture between the viewers and the photographs which has helped make Lux a star in the world of collectors. Her large prints have been selling for close to \$20,000, and her photographs have surfaced in galleries and museums worldwide, including the Guggenheim in New York, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, and the Musée de L'Elysée in Switzerland. However, neither fame nor years of working on one theme has slowed Lux's interest in the subject of youth. "I'm going to continue with my series of children," she says. "It's an ongoing series of imaginary portraits. I don't think it will finish as such, but it can go in several ways."

