

My Photography

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My concern for photography developed in my early teens, and I started my own darkroom soon. In my later teens I was assisting Warja Honegger-Lavater (1913-2007) in her work for the SAFFA Exposition in Zürich (1958)¹ and, in this capacity, I was fortunate to be in a position to peruse Werner Bischof's photographs in his own atelier (administered by his widow, Rossellina Burri Bischof). During the subsequent training in architecture at the *Hochschule für Gestaltung* in Ulm (1958–63), I was given a decent foundation in photography (negative and positive darkroom practice, studio and lighting, architectural photography) by Wolfgang Siol and Christian Staub (1918-2004)², and I was strongly influenced by the design concepts — and the aesthetics — of this school (Otl Aicher, Tomás Maldonado, Anthony Frøshaug, Friedrich Vordemberge-Gildewart, and many students).

My interests in photography paralleled my professional development, first as an architect, and subsequently as a regional and environmental planner in the USA (1965–74), trained at the Universities of Oregon (Eugene) and North Carolina (Chapel Hill) and as a teacher (Assistant Professor for Planning and Environmental Sciences) at the University of Virginia (Charlottesville). Around 1970 I discovered the Roy Stryker photography collection of the Farm Security Administration in Washington DC (with the photographs of Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, John Vachon, Arthur Rothstein, et al.). Upon returning to Switzerland, I was working for Electrowatt Engineering Services³ as an economist and planner (1974–88) in the fields of water resources planning (in countries like Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Iraq, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Malaysia and Pakistan) and, during the course of many missions (extending from one to three months each), I was in a position to photograph and document life (on 35mm film, using Nikon F or Widelux cameras), occasionally in remote parts of this world (such

¹<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SAFFA>

²<https://www.fotostiftung.ch/de/nc/index-der-fotografinnen/cumulus/0/St/0/>

³Now Pöyry, <https://www.poyry.ch/en/front-page>

as in Shendam or Wukari in Nigeria; in Vélingara in Senegal; or in the Swat Valley in Pakistan).

Early in the 1980s I bought a Sinar F camera and in the 1990s I acquired a Cambo Wide camera (to reduce the weight involved in carrying the Sinar around in the mountains). My interests in the field of 4×5 inch photography centered on landscapes and man-made influences (including mountainous landscapes I was encountering as a rock climber and mountaineer), vernacular architecture, and Jewish cemeteries (because of my background as an eastern European Jew).

In recent years I have started a concerted effort to print a selection of my negatives, beginning with the 4×5 inch format, i.e. sets of photographs (from early 1980 onwards) that were taken on Iford FP4 and Polaroid 55 P/N film with the Sinar studio camera (with a Rodenstock-Sironar 5.6/150 lens) or the Cambo Wide (with a Schneider Super-Angulon 5.6/65 lens). Prints are made on baryta paper (silver prints) of the size of 16×20 inches (or 20×24 inches) and toned in selenium.

I do my own enlargements (in my own darkroom), at least partially, but I have also cooperated with Wilhelm Lothar (Adliswil), a master printer⁴. My most recent tool was the construction of a DIY fix-focus camera (based on a Sinar standard, a 90mm Schneider Super Angulon lens, and a 6×17 cm DAYI camera back), providing me with the possibility to assemble 17×24 cm negatives (for very large prints of great detail).

⁴<http://www.tobias-humm.ch/wilhelm-lothar/>