

Who lives here
Ezra Enzo

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Who lives here focuses on intimacy and the tension between public and private space through street photography. For six months I have been discovering and revisiting the works of photographers such as Gary Winogrand, Robert Frank, Mads Nissen, Francesca Woodman, and other major photographers. These various artists strike me for different reasons, and I attempted to bridge my interests with their different works into one project. I love photographing life from the street, but often I find that we get so little from the people we immortalise in a photograph. We can imagine their stories and backgrounds, but their real emotion is harder to capture in such quick passing on the street. Conversely, some photographers are so close to their subjects that the mystery and beauty of the unknown is lost.

For my series, I tried to record these emotions: a little boy crying or a young girl smiling at her grandfather, for instance. I made the portraits extremely up-close: I approached my subjects and neared as close as I could without them noticing, and then used a telephoto lens to zoom even further. My goal was only to capture their face and expression, decontextualised from a social, cultural setting. I often sought out crowded, touristy areas of various major European cities both so that my presence would not have any affect on a person's behaviour, but also because when lost in a crowd, people tend to be more authentically themselves.

However, in addition to the street portraits, I also photographed mundane domestic scenes without people. My goal here was to evoke the same closeness and emotionality that exist in people's expressions, but using 'their' homes (obviously I did not actually photograph the homes of the people in the portraits, but the domestic scenes are still those of strangers). I tried to capture several conflicting things with these photos: domesticity, quaintness, personality, voyeurism, eeriness, and emptiness. I photographed rooms through windows, open doors, gates, etc. Like the portraits, I did not have permission to do this, but the goal was to be as invasive as possible, while simultaneously representing the inherent personalities of the rooms. This project was all about intimacy and the relationship between the photographer and the photographed, which is why I chose to represent both the person and the space in which that person lives.

The photos are paired by similar subjects and ages– in the end I decided to arrange the series by age, although the beginning, midpoint, and end are all marked by the domestic scenes. While the tone and palette of the photographs align, they were taken across multiple cities with the intention of finding the human, unbound by cultural stereotypes and prescribed expression. Here the public and private spheres meld into one, here questions of tourism and local inhabitants, childhood and old age, and culture difference all play a role in the series.

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