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Newsletter, August 9, 2017

**Photo of the Week: Blast from the Past**



*Bryant Park, New York*

I took this image in 1969 in my early days as a working professional photographer. Living in New York while attending school made leisure time a premium, but occasionally I'd wander the streets tootling about with a Nikon, a 50mm lens and a few rolls of Tri-X.

I can't remember what attracted me to Bryant Park which is located just behind the New York Public Library in mid-town. I'd just been in nearby Central Park which was big and noisy and I probably just needed a little calm.

This couple stopped me in my tracks. I had no idea what they were about, but they were beautiful in repose. Many scenarios flashed by; druggies was my first thought since Bryant Park in the late 1960s was prime dealing ground; homeless immigrants came to mind since the woman's sari pegged them as Indo-European; or simply, two lovers taking a break. Regardless, their mellowness was touching.

The photographer in me saw a composition right away. Their embrace was heartfelt with a familiarity evoking all lovers everywhere. My distance from them was just right, any closer and I would be intruding, photographically, in their space. Any farther and the intimacy would have less impact. I know now that this is a delicate balance but then it was just instinctual.

The folds of the sari, I knew, would have great tonality and the quality of the ethereal light made them seem like a boat set adrift. I saw that the bench and the fence weren't parallel and that the sari was flowing into the gap this created.

I also remember deciding to include the ironwork fence mostly as a textural detail and only later did I realize that it anchors the base of the frame and gives it a touch of reality, a nice counterpoint to the otherworldliness of the light.

There's a noble goal in searching for the wellspring of emotion that drives image making. One reason why we often photograph those near and dear to us is the urge to capture the bond that exists among us, however sentimental that may seem.

Photography has a reality no other art form offers. Genuine expression, a gesture, can be frozen in time. As a result, a photograph continually permits us to revisit our connection to the moment. I look at Bryant Park quite often not only as a remembrance but also to commemorate my feeling that I was on the right track choosing to become a photographer. I was lucky to find such certitude.

## **Book of the Week: *On Photography* by Susan Sontag**

This book first appeared in 1977 and is considered a classic about how to think about photography. At the time, Sontag had already established a reputation, in essays and novels, as a towering intellect. When *On Photography* first appeared, many critics panned the work but when it won the National Book Critics Circle Award that year, it began finding acceptance.

I encourage you to take the time to read *On Photography*. Its series of essays are truly thought-provoking stirring up as they do a great many sacred cows, several of which could use a spin or two.

Let me know your thoughts. I'll be interested in reading them.

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That's all for this week. The sun and the earth are inching closer to their occultation on August 21<sup>st</sup> when many of you will have a chance to see mother nature hit the dimmer switch. Be careful both with your eyes and your sensors and heed all the warnings about protection for both.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sontag', written in a cursive style.