

NO REMORSE *di Frank Horvat*

I always disliked carrying weights : my own weight, which at its worse got close to 100 kilos
- being more than enough for me.

Which is why I never cared to climb hills with a rucksack on my back. And why I jumped on Henri Cartier-Bresson's suggestion, when I first met him in 1950 and he persuaded me that my Rollei was not only cumbersome but dumb (' ' your eyes are not on your belly ! ' ') and that the only right tool for a photographer was a Leica.



Except that the only Leica I could afford at the time was a second hand one, and that its 50 mm lens turned out to be scratched and slightly unsharp. I never noticed it (my own eyes aren't that sharp either). And anyhow the photos I took with it, on my two-year trip to India, got published by the magazines and no one minded.

Leicas were light at the time, but over the years they got heavier. And single lens 35 mm reflex cameras (which I preferred because I could better control the focus) weighed even more, with all their tele-lenses, fish-eye lenses, tripods, and what-nots.

So when I returned to India, twenty years later, I took along Christine, my assistant. She was a lovely person, who in time became a good friend and an excellent photographer. She was (and still is) about half my size, but made it a point to carry all that stuff, while I was majestically walking ahead of her, carrying nothing. In a Punjab village, this seemed normal, carrying weight was a woman's task. But when we went to meet Indira Gandhi, and passed the sentries at the gate of her palace, I felt slightly embarrassed.



A few years later, when shooting fashion in Paris, and even though I continued using 35mm cameras, I needed three assistants to set up all those flashlights and backgrounds, not to speak of the chain of people in the lab, to develop, print and retouch.



Which was why I didn't feel the slightest remorse when I acquired, as early as 1992, my first Macintosh, along with a 1.0.0 Photoshop application, and began to throw overboard my obsolete hardware. In fact, not quite overboard (I hadn't forgotten how expensive it had been), but into

a closet, in a dark corner of my studio, where I allowed it to rest peacefully, with a decreasing hope to sell it for peanuts to some nostalgic sucker.

In fact there was a moment when I felt remorse : thinking back to the time when I had made an essay about trees, on Kodachrome transparencies that were to be projected. But in some instances I had failed to notice the electric cables in the background, which showed up in projection and made one think of a suburb. A few strokes of the mouse would have made those places look like wild nature - but there was no Photoshop yet and they ended up in the trash-bin.

I began to wonder, even though the idea may sound blasphemous, if the Almighty hadn't created Heaven and Earth, and subsequently Adam and Eve, with the deliberate purpose that Man should improve his Creation by inventing the personal computer. And I may not have been alone in that belief: why else would Steve Jobs have called it Apple ?

Admittedly, some of my best friends disagreed, Cartier-Bresson to begin with. And admittedly he had a point. Had Photoshop been available, he wouldn't have thought of photographing that man leaping over that puddle. While nowadays anyone could make anyone else leap over the Seine !

But then it must be said that Cartier-Bresson never joined the digital band-wagon, and that many of my fellow photographers were among the last to join it - long after the generals, the bankers, the surgeons, the grocers, the cops, the crooks and the whores - in part because photography was their secret science, something like reading and writing to the mandarins.

As far as I am concerned, I don't miss that secrecy. And don't mind Jack and Jill shooting their selfies and inundating the web by the billions ! I have other secrets in store.

Presently, the digital camera which I carry in my left trouser pocket doesn't weigh much more than the wallet with my credit cards, though it can record a much greater variety of situations than all the hardware sleeping in that closet.



There are some snags, no doubt : it takes some fumbling to extract the thing from my pocket - enough to miss a good shot - and some of the controls are too tiny for my fingers, not to mention the complexities of the interface, which may puzzle an Einstein. But all that may eventually get fixed. Much tinier cameras will be incorporated into your glasses, and triggered by a blink of your eye.

What cannot be fixed is the inflation of images : as it gets easier and easier to take photos, it will get harder and harder to take any that attract anyone ' s attention. I wish good luck to my successors!

