

# JAN SAUDEK: The Unknown Remains

**So** JAN SAUDEK is one of those artists whose myth stands so tall in comparison to his work that it threatens to topple over and crush it.

He appears to be a man who craves obscurity, in fact makes a fetish of it, but this desire for anonymity has turned tail and bitten him on the rear, as he's reportedly so well recognised and heroised in his hometown of Prague that he must dodge the crowds whenever he ventures out. Or so we are told by some members of the Czech art photography world, who may have more than a little vested interest in maintaining such a glowing gem in their midst. Certainly, no Czech photographer since his near-namesake and predecessor Sudek has risen above the ranks in the same manner.

Saudek's furtiveness had good cause, dating from way back in the days before Vaclav Havel's Velvet Revolution when to make any artistic statement as personal as his was to invite the secret police to your door come post-midnight, when to create images about oneself, one's own thoughts and desires

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# Brian Griffin

**I**T CAN HAPPEN, although often, that the creative way in art, subverted by countless others, can be completely forgotten unless their career has off. Brian Griffin is one such and although he has run of outside Britain and his work has been essential photographic imagery of One reason for his name through to Australia lies in to lay down the still camera sometime in October 1990, the movie camera instead, been a celebrated and used photographer for almost 2 land that art college, studio to be like, and he decided come to put out of his mind. By then he had respect

# DAVID BURNETT

**L**ITTLE FEET, a Cambodian refugee tenderly holding her child, was the image that led to photojournalist

Leica rangefinders, and long, fast lenses worth a fortune. Instead he turned to the means of another day, the big cameras and colour film of the 30s and 40s.

Or as close as he could get to the just sheet film Big Berthas beloved set sports photographers in that era, he chose instead to use Mamiya's 120 cameras, the 44s that are most to photojournalists's smaller weapons like, and the 6x6 and 6x7 rangefinders they called Sixas—where everything is Leicas.

"35mm is alright but it has its." Burnett explained in our phone session, and went on to praise the reliable quality of 120 format Tri-X and-white film when you blow it up feet by 6 feet and bigger."

The downside, or advantage as it sees it, of shooting big film in camera is that "you only have one go." They enforce a discipline that too contemporary photographers have opted, of being primed for the precise moment of greatest significance when comes together perfectly, poised to get it in just one frame. Burnett concluded our discussion of his work with a phrase that has most successful photographers' ments. "My favourite job is the most

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# OLAF Son of Two Cultures MARTENS

**T**HE FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL in 1989 and the re-unification of eastern with western Germany shortly thereafter created a generation that may be unique in the history of mankind and its recent ideological struggles. Olaf Martens'

generation in the German Democratic Republic was coming of age the moment the political system that reared them was shattering, to be replaced by another whose theories they knew well but whose practice they once had no hope of ever achieving. They are now the straddlers of two cultures, never entirely at home in one or the other, and true believers in neither pure capitalism nor state socialism.

Meanwhile Martens' work is featuring in the first big exhibition of German fashion photography, alongside well-established photographers like Helmut Newton, Peter Lindbergh and Ellen von Unwerth, his first monograph came out several years ago to almost immediate best-seller status, and his first retrospective show tours European galleries and museums throughout 1996.

I talked with Olaf and his close friend and collaborator the fashion designer Niels-Holger Wien after their latest shoot for the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung colour magazine.

**KARIN:** Olaf, you're unique in being a photographer who is very successful in the West, but was born in the East and began his career there. Tell me your story.

**OLAF:** East Germany was like a little apartment, and people in East Germany thought it was the biggest apartment in the world. There are not many big artists in such a little country and this was so because it had a system that was against individuals.

For the old generation, the old regime was very good for the theatre and those like Bertholt Brecht, the actors of the Bertholt Brecht Theatre, Gerd Hauptmann in literature. For the new generation developing at the time of the falling of the Wall, things were not so interesting.

The best generation is the one where the artists are now thirty years old, thirty-one, thirty-two. We have something of the character of the old East Germany, but we are young enough to think differently in this new era of reunification. We have the best things of the East, and the best of the West.

**KARIN:** How old were you when the wall came down, and how did that feel to you?

**OLAF:** Twenty-seven. It felt like nothing much. Life was still normal, no shock, nothing. A half-year after the Wall fell was my first trip to the West. All the other people jumped in their cars and said "I must make for the West at once."

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