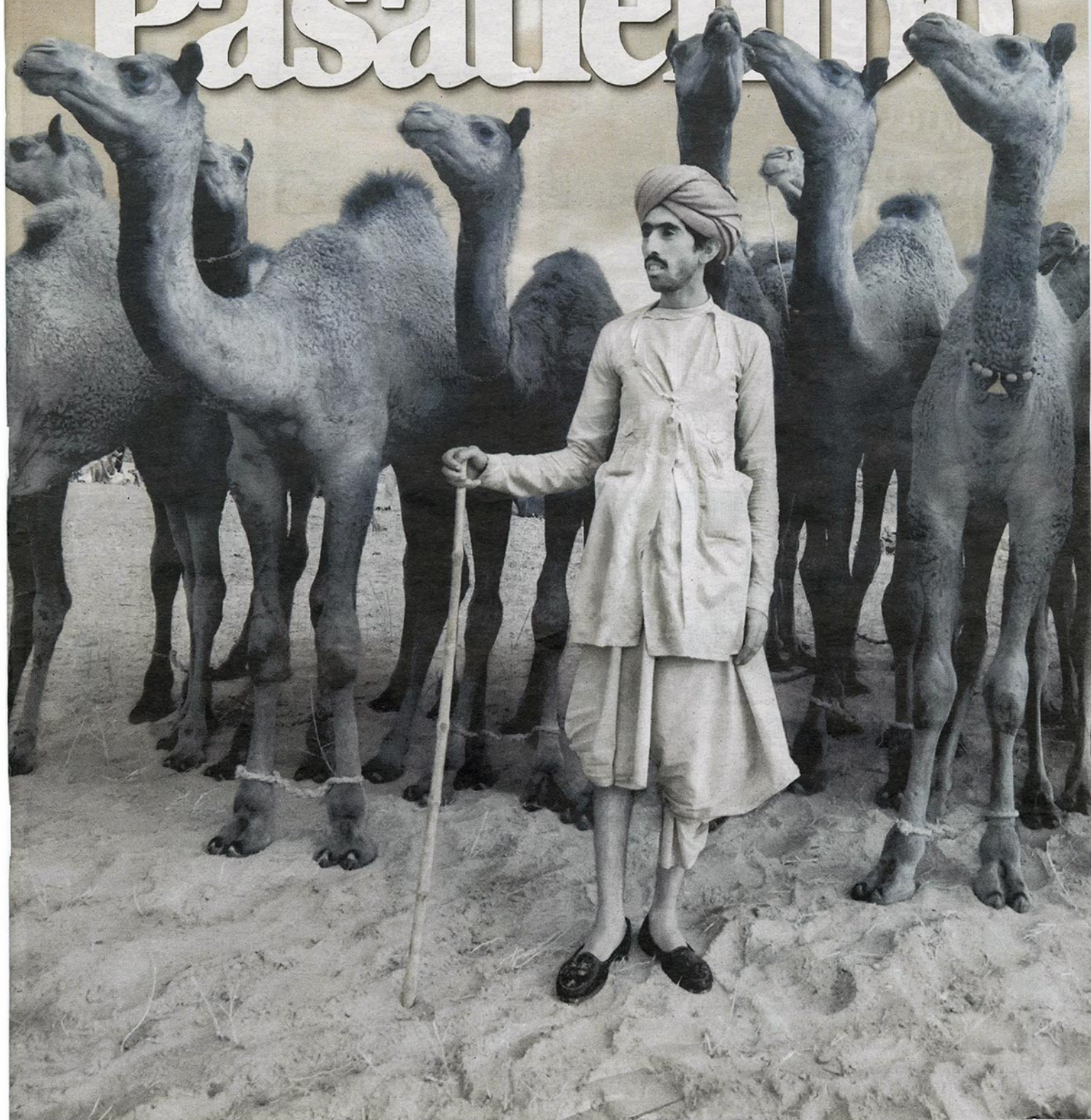


The New Mexican's Weekly Magazine of Arts, Entertainment & Culture



September 27, 2013

Pasatiempo



Pasatiempo

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ON THE COVER

34 Worlds in between

Nevada Wier's photographic portfolio is a wonder of faces, clothing, colors, and environments made among the tribal peoples of Asia, Latin America, and Iceland. For her newest series, she had one of her Canon EOS digital cameras converted to produce color infrared images. The results are startling. An exhibition of her work opens on Friday, Sept. 27, at Verve Gallery of Photography. On the cover is her 2012 photo of a camel trader in Rajasthan, India.

BOOKS

- 12 *In Other Words* Ghost Medicine
- 14 *The plot thickens* Anne Hillerman
- 54 *From the hip* David Scheinbaum

MUSIC AND PERFORMANCE

- 16 *Listen Up* The Shaw must go on
- 20 *Pasa Reviews* EntreFlamenco
- 22 *Pasa Tempos* CD Reviews
- 24 *Pasa Reviews* Conrad Tao
- 26 *Terrell's Tune-Up* Kid Congo Powers
- 29 *Onstage* Three Faces of Jazz
- 42 *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*
- 44 *First Rhythms* Heartbeat 44

GOVERNOR'S AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN THE ARTS

- 48 *State of the arts*

ART

- 30 *Transitional spaces* Tom Miller

MOVING IMAGES

- 58 *Short Term* 12
- 60 *Rush*
- 62 *Pasa Pics*

CALENDAR

- 68 *Pasa Week*

AND

- 9 *Mixed Media*
- 11 *Star Codes*
- 66 *Restaurant Review:*
Back Road Pizza

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Piñon Feast (detail), 1992,
by Jim Wagner

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Nevada Wier: Sri Lanka. Dalawella Village. Stilt Fishermen. 2010; top left, India. Orissa. Sakata Village. Dongri Khond Tribe. Girl in Doorway. 2010; top right, Myanmar. Chindwin River. Ngonegyi Village. Oxcart. 2013; opposite page, India. Assam. Kaziranga National Park. Great One-Horned Rhinoceroses. 2010; all archival pigment ink prints

WORLDS IN BETWEEN



Nevada Wier's infrared photos

Nevada Wier has been a “photographing traveler” for almost 35 years. Her new exhibition, opening at Verve Gallery of Photography on Friday, Sept. 27, is an amazing tour of cultures and faces. There is a Mongolian falconer with a chest full of Soviet-era war medals and a hooded eagle on his hand. There’s a gorgeous photo of stilt fishermen in Sri Lanka and others of a Burmese (Myanmar) shaman with an amazingly tattooed face; of a camel trader in Rajasthan, India, standing with more than a dozen of the gangly beasts; and of an airborne rhinoceros — captured running, in a split second when all four feet are off the ground.

What marks the difference between these photos and Wier’s previous work is that these are color infrared images. It’s her newest specialty.

Wier was born in Texas and grew up in Washington, D.C. Before finding her heart in photography, she studied outdoor education at Prescott College in Arizona and was an instructor for Outward Bound, which offers expedition experiences with a personal-growth subtext.

Everything changed when Outward Bound sent Wier to Nepal. She discovered, with the sensibility of an anthropologist, that she loved using her camera to capture tribal peoples. Since that time, the longtime Santa Fe resident has made excursions to Columbia, Mongolia, Peru, Sri Lanka, India, and Iceland. She has gone to Burma every year since 1986.

A Fellow of the Explorer’s Club, she has had her work published in *National Geographic*, *The New York Times Magazine*, and *Outside*. A *National Geographic Explorer* television show focused on her travels down the Blue Nile in Ethiopia. Her publications include *Adventure Travel Photography: How to Shoot Great Pictures Off the Beaten Track*, and she is currently working on *Outer India and Myanmar: Lost in Time*.

Pasatiempo interviewed her at her home and studio in La Cienega.

Pasatiempo: You’ve been an instructor for the Santa Fe Photographic Workshops for 16 years. Do you have anything coming up?

Nevada Wier: I’m doing a workshop next week [Sept. 16 to 20]. It’s called Creativity and Travel Photography. We’re going to the State Fair. They’ll have little stories. Teaching is one piece of the pie I must do to stay afloat, to be able to do my personal projects. I don’t do as much for magazines as I used to. There aren’t as many assignments, and the day rate has not gone up. I do a combination of talks, workshops, seminars, and some stock photography, which is dwindling.

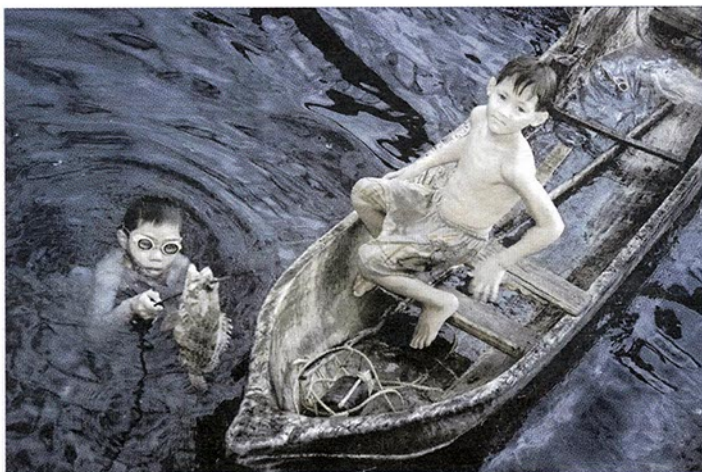
Pasatiempo: Why is that?

Wier: Photography is a very democratic medium. Everybody can get at least one great picture, and now you can put it on Flickr, and Getty [Images] can do a search and find that one-hit wonder. They don’t need photographers that are consistent. Newspaper and magazine photographers have to be consistent. In 1982, I worked for the *Santa Fe Reporter*, and that was great training. But at the beginning of the 2000s it was pretty clear that digital was where everything was going. I had one of the first digital cameras, and I went 100-percent digital in 2004.

Pasatiempo: It’s a new world for the professional photographer.

Wier: It is, and you have to pick and choose. With all the social media you have to decide how much you want to give away for free and how many blog articles you want to write for other people’s websites. When I started, the Great Barrier Reef was the photo editors. If you didn’t get beyond the Great Barrier Reef, you were not a professional photographer, at least in my genre, which is travel photography, or it’s really ethnographic photography. I am not a classic travel photographer. I haven’t

continued on Page 36



Nevada Weir, continued from Page 35

been to Europe since 1970. I work in more tribal groups, more anthropological photography.

Now I'm aware of people who have great recognition just by having a good website. At least I can say, Yay, I've worked for *National Geographic*. I still do work for them, but I'm not in the long queue begging for assignments anymore. I'm real lucky that I had the chance to do those. There's nothing like being on assignment and that pressure to get it done. What I really love right now are personal projects documenting tribal cultures.

Pasatiempo: Your first camera was a wooden Deardorff view camera.

Wier: I still have my film cameras but I prefer digital. It is more time-consuming, but I like the technology. And, for me, there's nothing better than printing from a digital file.

Pasatiempo: This exhibit is all color infrared. Tell us about that.

Wier: It doesn't have that sort of ethereal glow that people associate with black-and-white infrared. In 2007 I had one of my cameras converted, which meant taking off the filter that blocks the infrared light from the sensor. What I like about this is that I can see you but metaphysically speaking I'm photographing something I can't see, because we can only see the visible part of the electromagnetic spectrum.

It's similar to black-and-white photography. One reason I think people thought that was art was because you had to strip out color. You had to see the world differently. It's the same with this: I have to imagine you in infrared. The photos look very, very different. Skin becomes very pale, and it brings out tattoos and scarification. Brown skins look quite white. A lot of the people would look at these and say, "I'm a ghost. What did you do to me? You're making me ugly." You have to embrace the technology, because it is tricky to get the color just right. You have to use custom white balances. It is often difficult to predict the colors, and focus, when shooting infrared.

Pasatiempo: Why did you think of going toward this in photography?

Wier: It has the ability to make you stop and look. You can't relate to it. I started out in black and white, then I was doing color and now this; it's like this in-between world. And, again, I like the metaphysical aspect of it — that I'm photographing something I can't see.

Pasatiempo: What is the time period of the photos in the show at Verve?

Wier: Most of them are from the last three years.

Pasatiempo: Where did your strong interest in people and cultures come from?

Wier: Well, I grew up in Washington, D.C. and I went to a very small college in Arizona, Prescott College. I grew up very political, very cerebral, then I ended up rock climbing and kayaking, then came to Santa Fe for the Outward Bound school. I was an instructor. We went to the Gila and Pecos. I also ran river trips in the Grand Canyon and, in 1978, they sent me to Nepal to run their trekking program.

In Nepal I thought I was going to be a climbing photographer, but the villages were much more interesting. That's where it started.



Myanmar. Chin Hills. Kyahto Village. Chin Tribe. Shaman and Wife. 2013

Left, Myanmar. Mergui Archipelago. Ma Kyone Galet. Moken Boys. Fishing. 2008

Pasatiempo: You're shooting digital and using Photoshop now, but did you do [the traditional darkroom techniques of] dodging and burning when you were using film?

Wier: Oh, yeah. I had a darkroom. My philosophy as a photographer is I'm old school, where everything has to be right in the camera. If I crop at all, it's tiny, and I never change any content. I'm still working in that journalistic world. I take it seriously. Photoshop, for me, is an expansion of dodging and burning.

To me, everything in the frame has to matter, and a print is a singular manifestation; it's like a sculpture. I used to shoot slides and give them to the magazine editors. When I first started making prints from digital, I went back and read Ansel Adams' old books, because he was a master at building in texture and almost 3-D relief in a flat piece of paper. In *National Geographic*, the story has to stand on its own, but a print has to have a soul, because it doesn't have a story attached. I love it. ◀

details

▼ Nevada Weir: *Invisible Light — The World in Infrared* (Alan Pearlman: *Santa Fe Faces & Janet Russek: The Tenuous Stem* run concurrently)

▼ Reception 5 p.m. Friday, Sept. 27; through Nov. 2

▼ Verve Gallery of Photography, 219 E. Marcy St., 982-5009