



# Distinctive Image

featuring...

**Sammy Somekh, APSA, PPSA**

Ramat-Gan, Israel



*Days catch*

The *PSA Journal* continues its *Distinctive Image* series this time featuring Photographic Society of America (PSA) Israeli artist, **Sammy Somekh, APSA, PPSA**, whose favorite subject since 1978, when encouraged by the renowned Greek photographer, Jack Jacovides, to enroll in an extensive photography course, has been *Photojournalism*.

Through the years, Sammy has taken many Photojournalism (PJ) photographs, and in this issue, he shares with us his love for Human Interest images.

In 1980, Sammy joined PSA and in the mid-eighties he began participating in international exhibitions. In 1993 he won an Honorable Mention in the *PSA Photojournalist of the Year Competition*; six years later, he won the PJ *Ollie Fife* award for the Best Published Picture of the Year. His pictures have frequently been reproduced in exhibition catalogues and Sammy has won many medals, too numerous to list here. He has seven prints in the PJD permanent print collection and has appeared in *PSA's Who's Who* listing for top

exhibitors in 1995, 2003-2005 and again in 2007. The *Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain* recognized his photographic achievements with the Licentiate'ship (LRPS) Award and that was followed with the Associate Award (ARPS). The *Federation International de L'arte Photographique* acknowledged Sammy with the prestigious Artist Award (AFIAP) in 1988 and the Excellence Award (EFIAP) in 1999. Mr. Somekh has displayed his work in many Invitational Shows including PSA's *Best of Country Representatives Traveling Exhibition*. He received his PSA Distinction for Proficiency in Photography (PPSA) in 2004.

This PSAer has rendered service to the Society through his involvement with the *PSA International Affairs Committee*. He has been the International Representative (IR) for Israel for the past thirteen years. As an IR, he initiated a program for Israeli photographers, assisting them in securing PSA Star Ratings by helping with form preparation and eliminating application errors. The Society's divisional directors endorsed



Painting in Pireus

this service in 2005. Mr. Somekh was elected an Associate of the Society (APSA) in 2007.

A prolific author, Sammy has written many articles sharing his expertise in photography. Beginning in 1996 to the present, the *PSA Journal* has published seven feature articles by Mr. Somekh and he has received his fourth *Journal* editorial bronze star. In addition to writing for the *PSA Journal*, he has written several articles for Israeli magazines and newspapers. His love for photography has made him a much sought after lecturer and Sammy has responded with presentations given to many Israeli camera clubs. His favorite talks include a comprehensive lecture on Photojournalism with a short history and then a screening of 77 of his international exhibition acceptances and awards. Sammy has served as a judge for many monochrome and color print exhibitions.

As a young boy, in spite of his Greek uncle's attempt to interest him in photography, Sammy loved painting. In 1973, Mr. Somekh graduated from The Technion, Israel's prestigious Institute of Technology and he began to pursue a career in architecture and town planning. A few years later, while working in Cyprus, Sammy was fortunate to meet the prominent Greek photographer and past winner of *PSA's International Understanding Through Photography Award*, Jack Jacovides, who became the young man's mentor. Jack encouraged Sammy to enroll in a photography course and "the thrilling adventure began." It was Jack who instilled in Sammy a love for photojournalism and taught him to strive for excellence. Presently Sammy is a self-employed architect but he relishes



Who cares?

his passion for photography where, "I sometimes feel more pleasure taking photographs where I can do whatever I please and tackle any subject—take it or leave it."

Red carpet treatment





*The little rookie*



*Chow for meow*



*Hush puppy*

Photos © Sammy  
Somekh, APSA, PPSA



Fish fingers



No heed to need

## TECHNIQUE

Photojournalism (PJ) requires top alertness, a keen sense of observation and a great deal of perseverance. Sometimes, events happen in a flash; at other times a PJ situation takes time to develop. In the latter case I do my best to stick around and wait if I sense that "something" is in the offing. For my travel and free subject photographs I prefer to stay on manual mode to feel the true flavor of photography but for human interest shots I switch to automatic with aperture priority. Most PJ situations do not allow enough time to tamper with camera controls, or to change lenses for that matter. This is why I currently use the Sigma 28-200 zoom in place of my three Nikon lenses: 28, 50 and 80-210mm zoom. I have sad stories to relate about PJ situations that eluded me while changing lenses. Likewise, a tripod is out of the question for PJ shots; for by the time I even think of taking it out, the picture will have vanished. Selective focus, however, is important so that the main subject does not lose its prominence. Another requisite is staying as unobtrusive as possible especially in countries where people are wary of photographers.

For my serious work, I prefer film because it impels me to "Think Before You Shoot" (my motto). Film frames do not come cheap and I find myself more concentrated and disciplined with a film camera before clicking the shutter. Digital, with its seemingly unlimited number of frames, makes me somewhat careless, at times shooting at random since I'm aware in the back of my mind that I can delete unsuccessful shots. Tripping the shutter at the crucial split-second is my challenge. No motor-drive for me thank you.

As a confirmed Nikon-ist, I started out with a Nikkormat FTN in 1973 then graduated to a Nikon FE in 1981, which was my mainstay until 2007 when I switched to its younger sibling, the Nikon FE2. That same year I also purchased the digital Nikon Coolpix 7900 (which I like to call "Mousie" because of its petite size). But, to tell the truth, I feel more elated when I shoot a "winning" picture with my film camera.

## ARTIST'S STATEMENT



*I like to read real-life stories dealing with real people. I guess this is why I'm attracted to photojournalism, which tells a story and involves the candid shot of that ephemeral event representing the witty or melancholic; the unexpected or commonplace and embodied by facial expressions, peculiar postures or casual body language of an individual or a group of people. A moment in life is a moment gone forever, never to return. So perhaps I take pictures out of an inherent sense of loss. I like to imagine that I'm preserving that elusive, decisive moment forever. Spontaneity is the key factor; posed situations are out. Photojournalistic content takes precedence over composition. But there are additional dimensions to photography: communicating the message, sharing the story. In this respect, the international competitions are my arena, the judges' assessments are the litmus test of my work. If the picture is deemed worthy of being accepted and exhibited, I know that I've succeeded in conveying my message, in sharing the moment. And nothing gives me greater satisfaction.*

*Sammy Somekh, APSA, PPSA*