

MUSEUMS



Southwest Museum of Photography photo

National Geographic photographer Steve McCurry took this picture of a Tibet pilgrim at a monastery, which can be seen in "The Path to Buddha — A Tibetan Pilgrimage," an exhibit at the Southeast Museum of Photography in Daytona Beach.

FACE OFF

'Buddha,' 'Kertesz' splashes color into DBCC's new facility

By LAURA STEWART
FINE ARTS WRITER

DAYTONA BEACH — The focus in two superb new exhibits at the equally outstanding new Southeast Museum of Photography is on the ultimate human elements: faces and figures.

Images and impulses could hardly be more different than they are in "The Path to Buddha — A Tibetan Pilgrimage: Steve McCurry" and the less eye-catching "Andre Kertesz: First and Last." But conceptually the two exhibits overlap like the dark and light sections of the yin-yang symbol, intertwined and mutually enlightening.

The images by McCurry, a Magnum photographer known for strong color work made in war-torn parts of the world, are big, bold and superficially gorgeous.

Pictures like his 1994 "Golden Rock, Kyaukse, Myanmar (Burma)" and 1998 "A Monk Studies Buddhist Scripture in Aranyaphat, Thailand," use color more than effectively. They revel in their exotic beauty, in the rich purples and saffrons that are natural to their subjects and in the textures he so ably captures and conveys in large prints.

What is less immediately evident is the subversive way McCurry allows the color to seduce his viewers, to draw them into what might otherwise be difficult topics, and immerse them through their willing suspension of disbelief.

His color reinforces the images, at first glance and — most impressive — later, in memory. In a typically telling installation, one wall of the serene ground-floor gallery is covered with faces that, without McCurry's luscious color, might seem merely foreign: children; women; a monk; so venerable his skin is like a topographical map of the world.

In the end, though, it's the innate humanism of his work that makes McCurry such a great photographer.

The tiny figures of two orange-draped men are almost invisible against a vast wall of weathered carvings in "Monks at the Banyan, Angkor Wat, Angkor, Cambodia," from 1998, and the pious pose of the light-flooded Thai monk in McCurry's 1998 study is subtly echoed in the small cat behind him, silhouetted like a sphinx.

If You Go

WHAT: Downstairs gallery exhibits: "Steve McCurry: The Path to Buddha — A Tibetan Pilgrimage" and "Andre Kertesz: First and Last" **WHEN:** 1-5 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday in December

WHERE: Southeast Museum of Photography, Hosseini Center, Building 1200, Daytona Beach Community College, 1200 W. International Speedway Blvd.

ADMISSION: Free **INFORMATION:** 386-506-4475 or visit smrponline.org

Around the corner, in the museum's quieter display, 120 miniature prints by one of the greatest photographers add new dimensions to his well-known body of work.

"First and Last" offers vintage contact prints made by Kertesz as a young man in his native Hungary, among them soldiers coming home from World War I and nude swimming scenes, and then reveals the late, previously little-known Polaroids he shot from his New York apartment.

It's not so much the contrast that makes "First and Last" so gripping, nor is it the new insights it brings to a master's work. It's simply the last worlds that gradually open to the viewer, particularly in the vintage shots. Yellowed yet unfaded and etching-crisp, they let us share the day young Kertesz embraced young Elizabeth, their mutual affection radiating from an image as precisely dated as a specimen: June 8, 1921.

One by one, the old snaps create a vivid, vanished universe, their artlessness similar to those Jacques-Henri Lartigue so famously took at the turn of the century. The contrast slides gently into place at the end of the sentimental, though very intelligent and experimental, Polaroids that preoccupied Kertesz in the '70s and '80s.

After a long series of elegant still-lives, we see the man. Recognizable as the one with Elizabeth, in 1921, he is sharp-eyed and lean. But he is an old master, still brilliantly exploring new mediums, techniques and imagery.

Images from Steve McCurry's 'The Path to Buddha — A Tibetan Pilgrimage'



A TIBETAN WOMAN



A TIBETAN MAN

Images from 'Andre Kertesz: First and Last'



POLAROID SILHOUETTE GLASS



POLAROID GLASS HEARTS