



Brigid Grauman talks to a photographer whose ambition is not to capture the fleeting moment, but to take pictures that linger in the mind

Photographer Carl De Keyzer, 37, works for the press agency Magnum. He has had dozens of solo exhibitions, taken part in even more collective shows, and has won many prizes, including the Eugene Smith Award in New York. He has also produced five books, including "India," "God, Inc." and "East of Eden," from which these two photographs have been selected

in 1989, I worked on *Homo Sovieticus*, a book that charts the last years of the Soviet Union. After that, for *East of Eden*, I travelled for two years in East Germany, Poland, Hungary, Rumania, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Albania, among other places, because I wanted to chart the changes in eastern Europe and the western influences, the failure of one system and the arrival of something new. These pictures were taken in Albania where I spent two weeks.

The first I shot inside a factory where they used to produce monumental statues in the Soviet Realist style. It closed five years ago and a handful of men are still working there as official caretakers, but in fact they make their living by letting in visiting photographers and television crews and charging them. I paid

twenty dollars for a half-hour visit, the only time I have ever paid to take a picture.

This truncated statue that used to stand eight metres high is of Enver Hoxha, Albania's dictator who ruled for four decades and died in 1985. It used to stand in the main square of the capital, Tirana. I wouldn't be surprised if the men in the factory hadn't defaced it a little more than it already was, just to make it look more dramatic.

The picture is a good symbol of the past, and contrasts well with the other picture, which evokes the new generation in a country that's in a complete state of chaos. I took it in a mountain village called Elbasan at the end of market day. On the left, you can still see some carpets, sheets and clothes. The old woman was there with the baby, and I thought the scene resembled a nativity.

I used a flash to eliminate the shadows, and later in the darkroom, I gave the baby a shorter exposure time so that he would stand out from the rest of the scene. I always take along the same camera, a Plaubel Makina with a German body and a fixed Japanese lens, in addition to a camera with a wide-angle lens for panoramic shots.

All the pictures are black and white, which works well with symbolic or surreal images in which atmosphere is what counts most. I also felt that black and white suited eastern Europe. It allows you to play with contrasts and shades of grey.

All my trips are self-financed, and I always publish a book at the end. The way I do things is to walk around for six or seven hours a day, looking for scenes to photograph.

I see myself as an observer of large movements in time and I want to make photographs that are less ephemeral than press pictures, which tend to be somewhat short-sighted. I am an essayist-photographer working somewhere between art and documentary.

The trip to Albania was very depressing. These aren't happy times there, and I much preferred journeying in India and the Soviet Union. Some countries, like the Czech Republic and Hungary, are moving along fast, but Albania and Rumania are even worse off than before.

I'd say my work is becoming more abstract. I used to tell stories, now I prefer to make personal statements. My current project is called *Images of Power*, historic pictures of the end of the century.

The prints will be very large, 2 X 2.50 metres, in colour, and the idea is to make a 20th-century equivalent of the large historical paintings by Delacroix, Velasquez or Rembrandt. Unlike them, I want to focus on the people on the sidelines, the silent witnesses.