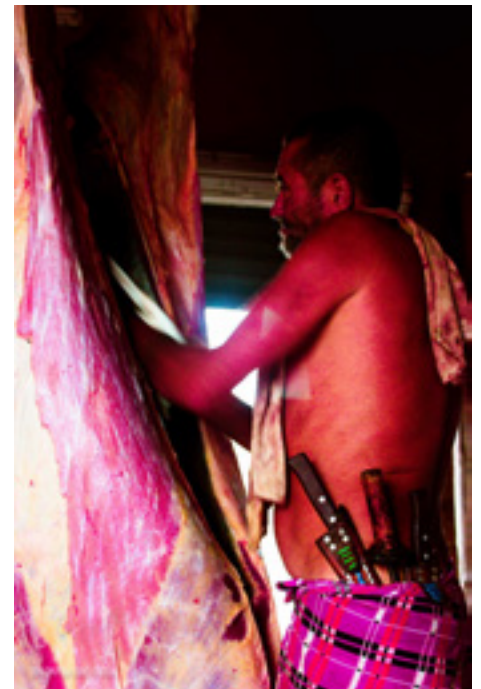


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EDSON PRUDENCIO DE LIMA

THE INVISIBLE OTHER





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INTRODUCTION

It was the third day of my holidays in Pernambuco in July 2014. My nephew and I went to a small dam to throw cobblestones into the water. It is funny to see how they slide on the water, no matter if you are a 10 or a 35-year-old boy.

On my way to the small dam I saw a familiar small building, somehow remembered as something dirty and forbidden. As the recently painted façade showed, the local slaughterhouse had been renovated. At the back, outside, a big black ox behaved just like a big black ox would do.

We went on, played together and got tired. It was about time to leave. On our way back, we once again passed in front of the slaughterhouse.


ETHIC AND AESTHETICS

But when I looked back, as if I wanted to say farewell to that place, I realised that the big black ox was no longer there and the tiny door of the dark slaughterhouse was opened. I got closer and saw the ox, the big black one.

Dead.

It was upside down, tightened. Half of its hide had been stripped out by two rough, skilled man.

The big black ox became, due to its white flesh exposed, a white ox. Or it was not longer an ox. It was meat. The big black ox became read, meat.



There was another door at the back of that humid, dim place. I found out that the cattle was kept outside the slaughterhouse - not for a long time - before being forced in to be knackered. I could not move, but I noticed there was a beautiful light coming from where the rough men had brought their prey. I could also foresee good pictures with all the blood on the floor, reflecting hands, arms, knives, head, horns and everything that existed and ceased to exist around me. All the raw, brutish aesthetics of that place and its offensive smell revealed itself before me.

Still static, I looked round and saw some dirty children, with bare feet, walking carelessly over the dead animal's fresh blood. Then it dawned upon me that although I was initially shocked by the animal's brutal death I was from that time on shocked by the children's miserable life.

I decided to photograph everything; ethically and aesthetically.

THE EVERYDAY LIFE

After a short life, a plant-eating animal is clubbed to death while it vomits its own dung. It falls down on the cold ground which is soon to be painted by blood red. Among some grown ups, one of the small kids shouts, as a squalid man raises his hammer: "Take that!".

Soon after that, outside, the other three or four children start to clean the ox's insides, using an improvised cauldron full of boiling water. All the toothless mom's children walk, play and quarrel around among smoke, blood and excrements.

Inside, the busy men work methodically on chopping up the dead animal. They give shape to more or less exquisite types of meat cuts.

The photographer, less astonished by then, moved around carefully in order to keep his equipment far from the hanging guts. He concentrates, uses the good principles of photography to distribute the elements around his composition and makes sure every single element is appropriately positioned in his new photo.

Back to our urban everyday life, how can we deny that homeless people around the corner have not become invisible to us?

How can we deny that the effort to come up with a great picture can be as biased as the way we see prime beef cuts beautifully wrapped up in supermarkets?

THE ROUGH MEN

Back to the small, dark slaughterhouse, the two hectic men worked hard to make sure the former ox could be sold as food.

Right after being asked if it would be ok to photograph them, a skinny bearded old man answered naively: “Course you can, but you may crack you camera: we’re too ugly!”.

They wore almost always just flip flops and shorts, and both would greet me in a friendly way every time they saw me in the village.

The oldest, the bearded one, seemed to be in a constant state of tiredness.

THE CHILDREN

Pretinho is 10 years old, he is skinny and has a bright smile. He is also shy and is not very talk active. He is friends with Eduardo, Marivalda (nicknamed Valdinha), Tubiba and Janaína.

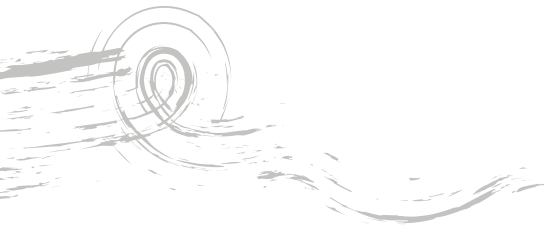
Eduardo is 6 years old, a naughty boy: he laughs and asks all sorts of questions, runs all round and is very curious.

Valdinha is a friendly 10 year-old girl. She is polite and would call me “sir”. “ - Will you come back tomorrow sir?”. Her fingernails had this bright old green nail polish. She was the typical caring older sister, who has fun with and takes care of her siblings.

I thing Tubiba is 8. Sometimes he would hit his younger brother. When I asked him if he was attending school, his older sister quickly answered: “He is, but only sometimes. When he does go to school , he nods off...”. Janaína, the youngest , summarised: “Tubiba is lazy...”.

Janaína was the one who captivated me first. She is only 5, a tiny little girl with green eyes. She would follow me, either to see the pictures in the camera visor or just to have my attention. She would poke me and as soon she got my attention, she would just smile. For two days, she hold some coins in her little hands: they would buy her a strawberry ice-cream, a small one she said.

The girl on the right did not spend too much time with her siblings in the slaughterhouse. This is why I do not know her name and completely forgot to buy her clothes. But she quickly made up for my distraction by picking up a pantie from the bag of clothes my mom and I had bought. Feeling embarrassed, I bought her a pair of flip flops minutes before I left to my distant home town.



“- You’ll get some colourful flip flops”, said the little Janaína while her sister chose her present.

THE FAREWELL

On the last day, I decided not to photograph anything that ceased to exist. On that last afternoon, after photographing the kids playing and surrounded by those friendly and fragile personalities, I felt that the distressing time to say good-bye had come.

“- Where are you going to travel, sir?”, asked Valdinha.

“- I’m going back to São Paulo”, I answered

translation

Edson Prudencio
de Lima

text received

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Holding my arm, Eduardo, the naughty boy muttered with an unbearably sad voice: “- Don’t...”

I took my way back, holding back my tears.

Those people were not invisible to me.



EDSON PRUDENCIO

Systems analyst, English and Spanish language teacher, and dance and theater photographer. He is a member of the Migration Studies Group of CEM / Labur-USP, and worked as a volunteer at the Casa do Migrante between 2006 and 2007, in São Paulo. Over a period of years, sensitized by his experience while living in England and Peru, he has photographed the cultures and people from places where has visited. He seeks to capture in visual narratives the artist at work without losing sight of social problems.