

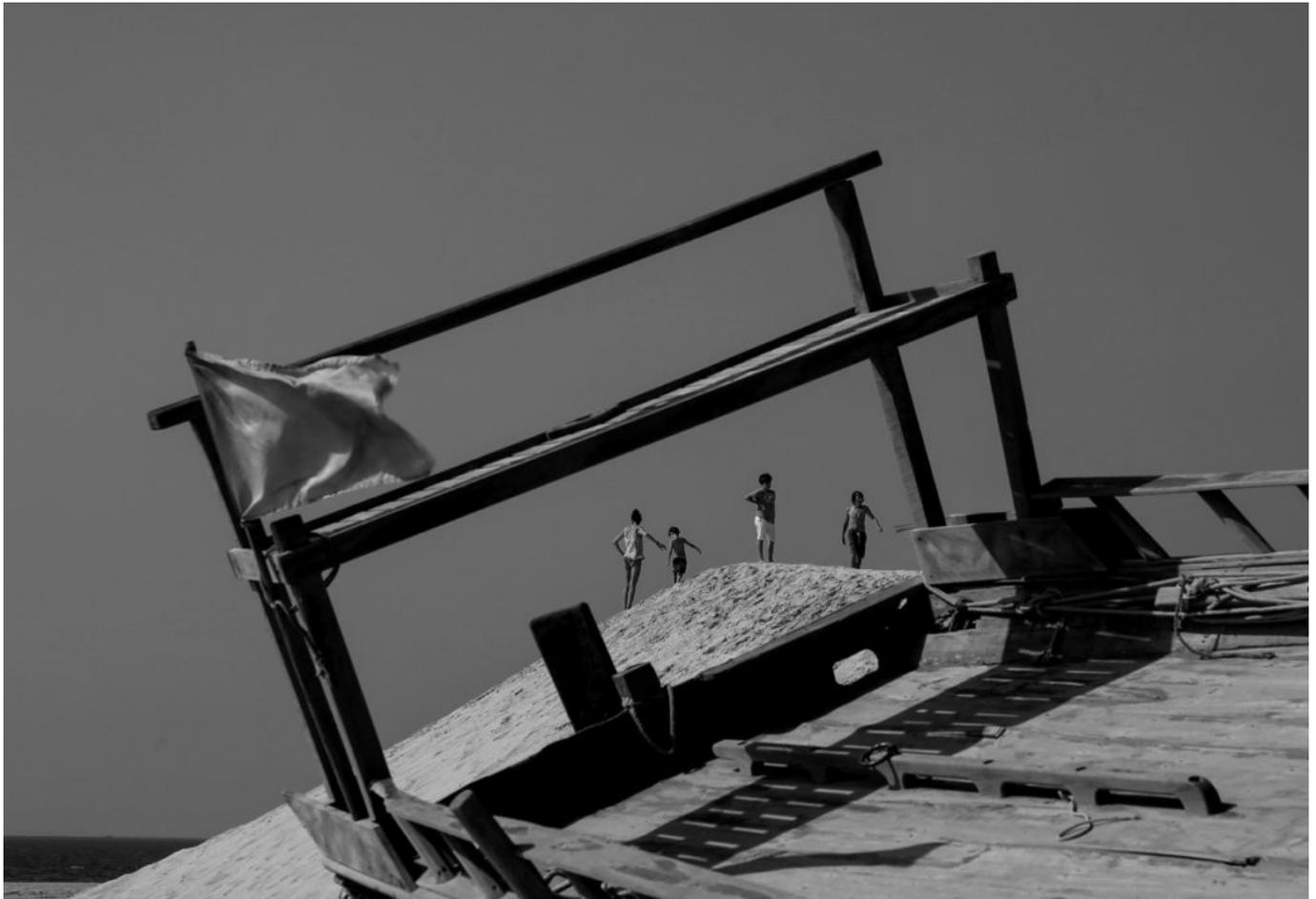
*Versione italiana*

You are an award winning creative director, published writer and photographer and yet the moniker you choose to describe yourself is storyteller. Why does this noun describe you best? My fondest childhood memories are of foggy winter evenings spent huddled around a crackling fire. During these evenings, we used to regale one another with stories made up on the spot. Holding the attention of other young kids wasn't easy, so each one of us would conjure up the wildest tales possible. I thoroughly enjoyed giving a free rein to my imagination. I consider myself immensely lucky that I am in advertising, a profession that allows me to engage with people through stories across various formats - TV, radio, print and digital. If I can't tell stories through advertising, I write short stories (the itch is strong). When it comes to photography too, I look for stories. After all, that's what makes a photo come alive. That's why I chose the moniker, "storyteller". Because whatever I do, there needs to be a story involved. Otherwise it doesn't really matter.



You have said, "The magic of black and white photography cannot be expressed, only felt." Can you expand on this thought?

Colours entertain, and even confuse. An average photo with generous lashings of colour can still grab eyeballs. But an image bereft of any colour stands exposed. Nothing distracts the viewer. If it doesn't have something compelling about it (composition, mood, lighting, subject), it's like bad advertising for a product - people may see it, but it won't make any impression on them. Which is why I believe an excellent black and white photograph has the ability to stir up some emotion deep inside. You may not be able to describe this sentiment, but you can definitely feel it.



As a traveler you have achieved the ability to “anticipate your impulses.” Does this skill influence the way you photograph?

Like most photographers, travelling to new places means experiencing a sensory overload in a good way. You sort of develop a heightened ‘sense’ of anticipation. You just have to wait, a bit patiently. And stories will unfold before your eyes.



Your portraits are distinctive and compelling. How do you establish a relationship with the people that you photograph, who are often strangers that you meet on your travels?

I believe in the concept of “slow” travel. Whenever I visit a new country, doing the “classic hits” is not on the list of priorities. Thanks to this, I haven’t really seen enough of the countries that I have visited. But what I have got in exchange are insightful conversations with the “locals” - “The Roadside Artist” in Bali, for example. Staying in a location longer makes it possible to get on a more than nodding acquaintance with the residents. And that can only be a good thing.



I believe every picture tells a story. When I first saw, *The Long Wait*, the image that was selected for *Dream of Venice in Black and White*, I felt the evocative “magic” of black and white. Can you share the story of the photo’s significance?

“*The Long Wait*” has a very emotional significance for me. It was in October 2017 when my mother and I went on a soul-satisfying road trip to Italy. My mother was yet to be diagnosed with what turned out to be a rather debilitating and terminal motor neuron disorder. At that time, however, she had difficulty in walking. The need of the hour was a wheelchair. Though Ma was mesmerized by Venice, at the same time she felt bad. She knew how much I love to capture a place through my roving lens. And here my hands were constantly on the handles of the wheelchair, my camera just out of reach in a dangling bag.

So I did the next best thing. Explored Venice at night. After a day of soaking in the sights, I dropped Ma off at our apartment in Cannaregio, had dinner, tucked her in, and went out with my camera. And that’s how I got ‘*The Long Wait*’ near the Rialto Bridge.

Almost a year later since our trip, I showed Ma my copy of *Dream of Venice in Black and White*. She first thought it was a book on Venice. I then showed her my photo. And despite her condition, she managed a bright smile. She no longer felt guilty that I couldn’t do justice to Venice through

my lens because of her illness. Ma passed away in May 2019. That trip to Italy was my last holiday with her; and will forever remain a cherished memory.



Mriganka (Micky) Kalita

Dream of Venice in Black and White

JoAnn Locktov