

STEPHEN DUPONT Axe Me Biggie

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FOTO
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In 2006, using a Polaroid Land Camera and an old chair and curtain backdrop borrowed from a local photographer, Stephen Dupont made a series of extraordinary portraits by a dusty roadside in Kabul, Afghanistan.

Jacques Menasche, a journalist who accompanied Dupont on the journey, describes the pictures, "One and all, the subjects of Stephen's photographs seem to understand eternity and they have a certain look for it, each one, even among the blowing dust and the swelling crowds, finding this "center," this patch of downtown Kabul magically transformed into a royal portrait studio, the rickety chair a throne on which the formal sitting takes place."

"Axe Me Biggie", explains Dupont, "is my crude Anglo phonetic rendering of the Dari for 'Mister, take my picture!', a plea I heard all over Kabul during my stay there in March 2006. It seems to mean something in English, axe being just a more visceral and violent version of the camera verb *to shoot* returning all its original aura of surrender. And because I am a big guy, 'Axe Me Biggie' also seemed like a request addressed to me personally. I *am* Biggie. And on this day Biggie finally answers them all, en masse, saying, 'Yes, alright. I will axe you, shoot you, and take your bloody picture. Have a seat!'"

Axe Me Biggie consists of 20 silver gelatin mural prints, hand printed by Chris Reid from Blanco Negro in Sydney, and a video installation and presentation of the making of Axe Me Biggie shown continuously throughout the exhibition.

Stephen Dupont is an international award winning Australian photojournalist and filmmaker and a member of Contact Press Images. He works on long term projects around war, conflict and social issues. His reportage has been featured in The New Yorker, Newsweek, GEO, Liberation, The New York Times Magazine, and Time. His awards include a Robert Capa Gold Medal, first places in the World Press Photo and Pictures of the Year International and a Walkley. He is currently working on a feature length documentary film and a 15 year book project on Afghanistan. He is represented by Byron McMahon Gallery in Australia and Contact Press Images in New York.

Recommended Reading:

Lutte (Marvel, 2003)

Steam: India's Last Steam Trains (Dewi Lewis, 1999)

See

www.stephendupont.com

www.contactpressimages.com