

## HERMAN

## CATER



In 1941 the Germans began their occupation of Celje Slovenia, then known as Yugoslavia. 1941 was also the year Herman Cater was born. Cater's family lived through the German occupation, Allied bombing and dismal aftermath of the war's destruction. In the difficult days of reconstruction, items such as photographic equipment were scarce, but Cater's father, a factory worker, was able to procure a camera and established a small business taking portraits to earn extra money for his family of six. At ten years old, young Herman began assisting his father, who taught him the art of taking photographs as well as processing and darkroom skills. At 17, Cater moved to Belgrade to study English language and literature. He became an English teacher, and in 1977 was made an advisor for foreign languages at the educational board.

Cater had joined a photo club in Celje in the eighties, and just three years ago he formed another club, SVIT, with his col-

leagues. "Now it is the best club in Slovenia. We study a lot," he notes. He looks forward to the interaction with other photographers and lecturers. "I also study photography and art on my own and occasionally go to summer school for photography." Cater admires the photography of Henri Cartier-Bresson and has also found a friend and mentor in fellow Slovene photographer Stojan Kerbler. "But I have to follow my own way," he says. Photography may be an avocation, but he approaches it as if he were a professional, perfecting his work through classes and travel.

Though his eye was honed on portraiture, as he grew older Cater fell in love with landscape photography, exploring throughout Slovenia as well as other lands. He just returned from Gotland, an island in the Baltic Sea. "There is fantastic light, which Ingmar Bergman liked so much." Natural beauty inspires Cater. "When I take photos of a landscape I become a part of it. It is perfect. My message: Take

care of nature, do not destroy it, or we die as well."

He explores other genres, including documentary work and nudes. He likes natural light, shoots digitally and in color except for some portraits. "Black and white I find very powerful," he explains. "So when I do portraits, I usually do them in black and white."

Cater first met the old man of his portrait series while taking photographs of mountain roads in Slovenia. "It is a sad story, Cater recounts. "He lived in the mountains in a 200-year-old house, far from the other villages. He had nine children who did not live far, but nobody cared about him." Cater began photographing the man over a period of seven months, documenting a meager existence of wine, cigarettes and scarce food. The two became friends. Cater used only the light coming through the windows of the old house; his use of chiaroscuro captures perfectly the shadow world of the old and alone. When the photographer learned the old man died of exposure last winter, he was deeply saddened. He now plans to create a book from his photos of the old man.

Cater's photographs have been exhibited in Europe and the United States, including about ten shows per year throughout Slovenia. His work is held in both private and public collections, such as The Arhitekturni Museum in Ljubljana, the Slovene capital. Cater is a MF FZS, or Master of Photography in Slovene Association, and AFIAP, Artist in International Federation for Art Photography. He has pub-

lished several books: *The Touch of the Light*, (2006), landscapes from his travels; *Maribor with Jure Kravanja* (2006), a book of the town in Siberia (2007); and *Portrait of a Photographer*, (2008) an extended photo essay on photographer Stojan Kerbler, published for his 70th birthday.

In 1985 Cater suffered a coma, the result of an infection in the brain from a tick bite. When he awoke, neural damage had caused paralysis from the waist up. Recovery was slow. In 1989, still unable to raise one arm, he began paragliding (prior to that he had been an avid hang-glider.) He also did exercises, yoga, meditation, and Shiatsu. Six years later, testament to his will power, he could move his arm and later his upper body. Now recovered, Cater is photographing again. This year he will publish a book about his ordeal to help people with the same affliction. "I like to help people," he says. "I tell them that we have to decide about being happy with what we have."

"People express themselves in different ways," says Cater. "I do it through photos. And a photo of a man can tell more than words." And much about its creator.

—Shawn O'Sullivan

■ PRINT INFORMATION  
40x30 cm prints—€200  
(~\$285)

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ALONE, SLOVENIA—2008



SHADOW AND MEMORIES, SLOVENIA—2007



WAITING FOR MEAL, SLOVENIA—2008



BREAD AND WINE, SLOVENIA—2008



ALTER EGO, SLOVENIA—2008