



ph: Nick Brandt - Special thanks to: Hasted Kraeutler Gallery

t: Claudio Rossetti, Valentina Nicole Scotti and Giulio Speranza - Grigio18%*

“...A DAMNED FINE PLACE TO BE!”

Wildebeest Arc, Masai Mara, 2006 - © Nick Brandt, courtesy of Hasted Kraeutler Gallery, New York

“PHOTOGRAPHY ALLOWS YOU TO JUST GO OUT AND CREATE HOW YOU WANT, WHAT YOU WANT, WHEN YOU WANT. YOU’RE IN CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE. WHICH IS A DAMNED FINE PLACE TO BE.”

THIS IS JUST ONE OF THE ANSWERS OF THE GREAT NICK BRANDT TO THE QUESTIONS BY CLAUDIO ROSSETTI, VALENTINA NICOLE SCOTTI AND GIULIO SPERANZA, MEMBERS OF THE GRIGIO 18% ASSOCIATION, A PARTNER OF IMAGE IN PROGRESS

If you work in photography and you also have always dreamed to ask some specific questions to some of the best photographers in the world, contact us!

info@edifore.com

Born and raised in England, Nick Brandt studied Painting, and then Film in London. He moved to America in 1992 and directed many award-winning music videos for artists like Michael Jackson (Earth Song, Stranger in Moscow, Cry), Jewel and Moby.

It was while directing Earth Song, a music video for Michael Jackson, in Tanzania in 1995, that Nick fell in love with the animals and land of East Africa. Over the next few years, frustrated that he could not capture on film his feelings about animals, he began to realize that there was a way to achieve this through photography.

In 2000, Nick embarked upon his ambitious photographic project: a trilogy of books to memorialize the vanishing natural grandeur of East Africa. The first two parts of the trilogy have been published in *On This Earth* (2005), *A Shadow Falls* (2009), and *On This Earth, A Shadow Falls* (2010), combining the best photos from the first

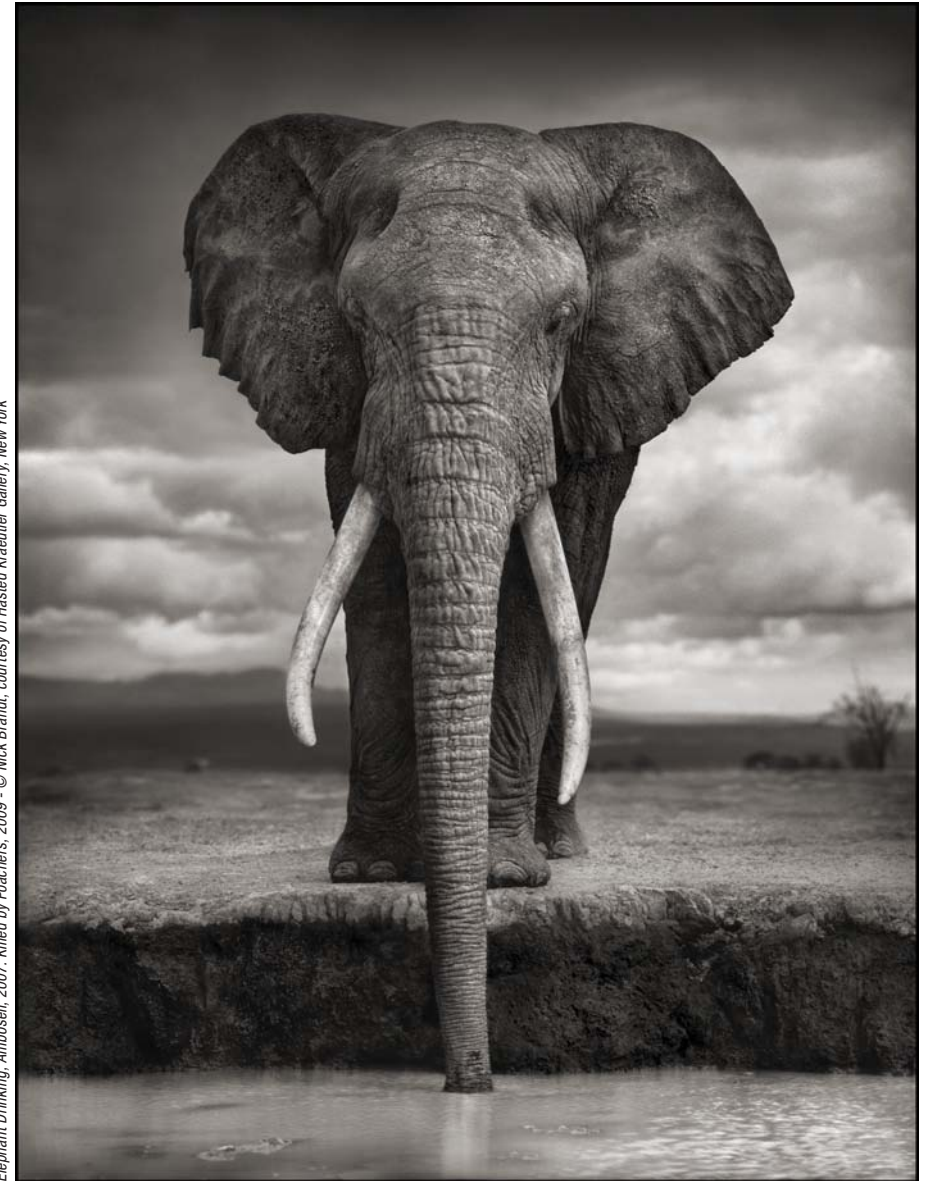
two books). Since 2004, Nick has had multiple solo exhibitions worldwide, including in New York, Los Angeles, London, Berlin, Sydney, Munich, Brussels, and Paris. Nick photographs on medium format black and white film without telephoto or zoom lenses.

His work is a combination of wide-screen panoramas of animals within vast landscapes, and graphic portraits more akin to studio portraiture of human subjects from the early 20th Century, as if these animals were from a bygone era.

In one of his books, Nick explains: “I’m not interested in creating work that is simply documentary or filled with action and drama, which has been the norm in the photography of animals in the wild.

What I am interested in is showing the animals simply in the state of Being. In the state of Being before they no longer are. Before, in the wild at least, they cease to exist.

Elephant Drinking, Amboseli, 2007. Killed by Poachers, 2009 - © Nick Brandt, courtesy of Hasted Kraeutler Gallery, New York





Elephant with Exploding Dust, Amboseli, 2004- © Nick Brandt, courtesy of Hasted Kraeutler Gallery, New York



Portrait of Lioness Against Rock, Serengeti, 2007- © Nick Brandt, courtesy of Hasted Kraeutler Gallery, New York

Cheetah and Cubs, Masai Mara, 2003 - © Nick Brandt, courtesy of Hasted Krautflur Gallery, New York



This world is under terrible threat, all of it caused by us. To me, every creature, human or nonhuman, has an equal right to live, and this feeling, this belief that every animal and I are equal, affects me every time I frame an animal in my camera. The photos are my elegy to these beautiful creatures, to this wrenchingly beautiful world that is steadily, tragically vanishing before our eyes.”

In 2010, Nick started work on the photos for the final part of the trilogy.

In this book, Nick plans to show an unavoidably sad, darker vision amidst the beauty. He had no idea at the beginning of the year that the tragic sights he would see unfolding in Amboseli and elsewhere across East Africa would compel him to decide, in August of 2010, to start Big Life Foundation.

It is his fervent hope is that the work of the Foundation can help slow down and ultimately halt the further destruction of the natural world he loves.

Nick divides his time between his home in the mountains of Southern California, and East Africa.

You have worked on a single photographic project for over ten years. What is the purpose of your work?

“To create an elegy to an extraordinary, beautiful natural world and its denizens rapidly disappearing before our eyes. To show these animals as individual spirits, sentient creatures as worthy of life as us.”

All around the world there are countless situations in which the natural environment and the ecosystems are threatened by human activities.

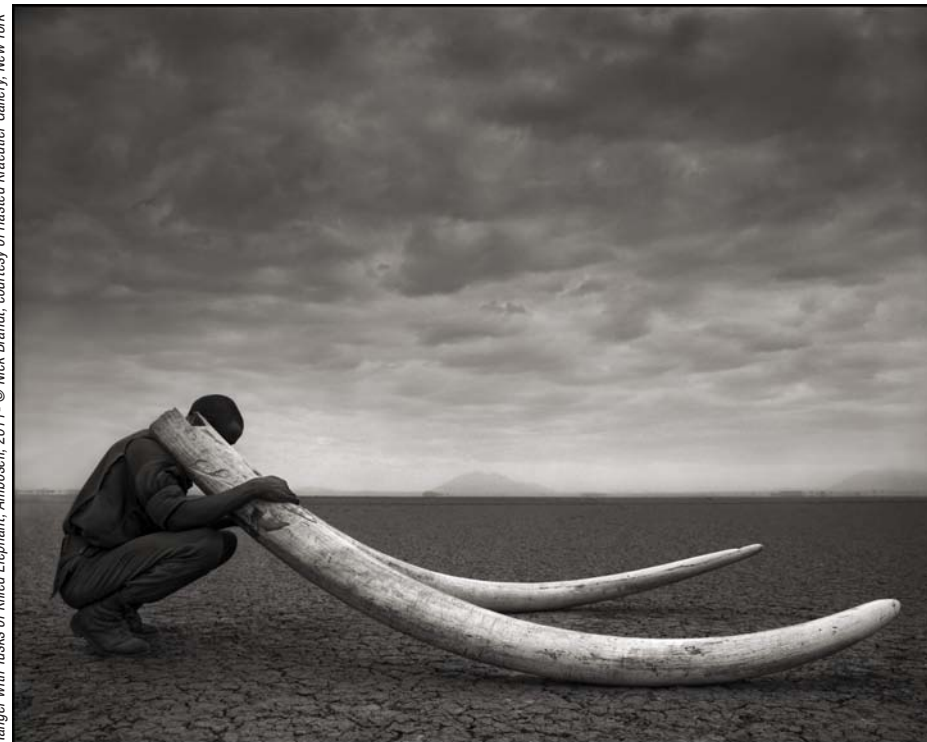
Why did you choose East Africa?

“East Africa just immediately, viscerally struck an emotional chord in me. Like it does so many people. There is something profoundly iconic, mythological even, about the animals of East and Southern Africa.”

You are a successful director. Why did you choose photography?

“No, I WAS a director. I gave up directing for photography back in 2003. The reason was that I was more and more desperate to combine my passionate love of animals, and what they mean to me, with my need to create visually. My love

Ranger with Tusks of Killed Elephant, Amboseli, 2011 - © Nick Brandt, courtesy of Hasted Krautflur Gallery, New York



of animals and the natural world came first, photography merely the chosen method to capture that. At the moment, it’s all I want to photograph for the rest of my life.

Unless you are a Spielberg or Scorsese or the like, trying to make films, you are ultimately consigning yourself to a life of misery. Vast precious tracts of your life, when you are at your most creative and most energetic, are consumed on projects that go through years of development but ultimately never see the light of day. You are completely dependent on the moneymen to give you the money to create, and even if you are fortunate enough to finally get the green light for your project, the compromises involved can take you a long way from your original vision. For so many in the film ‘industry’, you’re living for tomorrow, not in the present, unable to simply do what you are desperate to do, simply CREATE. Photography allows you to just go out and create how you want, what you want, when you want. You’re in control of your life. Which is a damned fine place to be.”

From an artistic point of view, your photos are very neat: how is your photography influenced by your painting and cinema studies?

“Neat? Huh, so does that mean that I have some kind of Photographic Obsessive Compulsive Disorder? Well, I would have to add wonderful photographers of the natural world like Edward Weston and Michael Kenna must also fall into that category. But the similarity is that all of us are photographing in black and white, where, often, one is searching for a very graphic and thus precise composition within the frame. As to how my photography is influenced by painting and film, I’ve really no idea how influenced. It’s not conscious. I just do what I do, instinctively.”

For your workflow you use medium format films and you scan them digitally. Do you use B&W films when you shoot photos?

“Always.”

Why did you choose this method? And why do you keep using it even today, when digital systems are available with the same features and more versatility?



Gorilla on Rock - Parc des Volcans, 2008 © Nick Brandt, courtesy of Hasted Kraeutler Gallery, New York

Lion Before Storm II - Sitting Profile, Masai Mara, 2006 © Nick Brandt, courtesy of Hasted Kraeutler Gallery, NY



“I shoot medium format film. It’s incredibly impractical for what I do - no zoom, no auto-focus, no auto metering, no motor drive, no image stabilizer lenses, just everything designed to make sure I screw up and lose the maximum number of shots in the process, and wait stressful nerve-wracking weeks waiting to see in the lab just how many I did screw up. But somehow, so far, it’s often worth it for the unexpected results: the way that sometimes, film can interpret what is in front of you in the most surprising, mysterious and magical way. It’s indefinable. But it’s something that I haven’t personally experienced with the more literal interpretation of digital cameras. Last year, growing frustrated by how many shots I was losing shooting with film, I bought a Hasselblad medium format digital camera, top of the range 60 megapixels. It cost tens of thousands of dollars. I had to try it in situ, in the places that I photograph. I took photos side by side with the film camera. The digital Hasselblad was sharper. It had more detail in both the shadows and the highlights. And I hated it. For me, the images

were too clinical, too sterile, too devoid of atmosphere. Just too....perfect. It seemed great for color, but not for black and white, with the aesthetic I’m after. So I sold the camera on eBay at a huge loss a few months ago, the worst investment of my life.”

Your approach to wildlife animals is not that of classical naturalistic photography. There are no scenes of hunting or predation typical of our African savannah imagination, but yours are black and white photos that call to mind portraits of the nineteenth century. Why did you choose this language? Do you think of yourself as a naturalist photographer?

“If you mean do I think of myself as a wildlife photographer, the answer is no. I’ve never regarded what I do as wildlife photography, and never have. Right from the outset, my intent was to photograph animals in a very subjective interpretive way, trying to show them for the sentient creatures I believe them to be, equally worthy of life as us, to take photos not of animals in action, but animals simply in a state of being, before they no longer are, thanks



Abandoned Ostrich Egg, Amboseli, 2007 - © Nick Brandt, courtesy of Hasted Kraeutler Gallery, New York

to the destructive hands of man. But comparing the photo to portraits of the 19th century is appropriate, as I deliberately want to make the images appear as if they were from a bygone era, as if these animals that I've photographed are already long dead. I also photograph animals in exactly the same way as I would photograph a human being, except that I have to wait for the moment for them to present themselves for their portraits."

In your pictures, animals are often surrounded by large empty spaces and endless horizons, which give us a vaguely nostalgic feeling of a world that belongs to the past. Is this interpretation consistent with your intentions?

"Yes. But also, I want to see the animals within the context of their world, their environment. For me, this informs our perception of them far better than telephotos shots with blurred backgrounds of dirt and grass."

With the first two books of your trilogy, you tell us that "On This Earth, A Shadow Falls". Is it true that in your third book you will show hope for the environment we live in, or do you feel that the damage caused by mankind is now irreparable?

"I'm not sure where you got the notion that the third book would show hope for the environment that we live in... This final book paints a much darker vision of the disappearing natural world in East Africa than the first two books. As we all know, the damage caused by mankind is escalating rapidly. Every day we are, of course, that much further away from being able to get back to the wonder and glory of what we've lost. In Africa, between the massive demand for animal parts from Asia and growing population pressure, there's an apocalypse going on. But that shouldn't stop us from doing everything we can to slow it down, and even reverse it where we can. This is why I started Big Life Foundation, to try and counteract the destruction and protect the animals and ecosystems of critical parts of East Africa."

Your photographic experience was born and developed in Africa. After this trilogy will you stop shooting? Are you planning other projects?

"Will I stop shooting? God, no. But do I know what I will photograph next? No. The only thing I am sure of is that whatever comes next, it will continue to be related to animals and the natural world and showing the beauty and tragedy of their place in the modern world. That's my mission."

www.nickbrandt.com
www.biglifeafrica.org

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Nick Brandt: On This Earth, A Shadow falls will be on exhibit at Hasted Kraeutler Gallery in New York through June 9 2012.

Upcoming exhibitions at Hasted Kraeutler:

Great Photographs: Scape
Awol Erizku
 June 14 – July 20, 2012

Kwang Chun Young:
 September 6 - October 20, 2012

Erwin Olaf
 (see the exclusive interview with him on Image in Progress N.2)
 October 25 - December 8, 2012

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