

Review: The Roma Journeys by Joakim Eskildsen and Cia Rinne

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Conscientious, jmcolberg.com/weblog, January 21, 2008

A great photography book is more than just a collection of photographs, regardless of how compelling those might be. It might ask questions, or it might present insight into a world unknown, or it might show the presence of a passionate vision - and it makes you want to come back to the images, so that you can re-immense yourself. There is no doubt that Joakim Eskildsen and Cia Rinne's *The Roma Journeys* easily satisfies all of these criteria.

The sheer size of the book mirrors the efforts undertaken to produce it. Over the course of several years, the authors traveled to seven different countries, to live amongst the Roma for extended periods of time. The resulting book contains nearly 400 pages with over 300 photographs plus texts about the histories of the Roma in each of the countries; and to top it off, you also get a CD with audio recordings.

I cannot claim to know much about the Roma, and the same is probably true for most people. Now widely thought to originate from regions in northern India - in large part because of linguistic analyses - the United Nations in 1979 recognized the Roma as a distinct ethnic group. Throughout history, the Roma have been subjected to discrimination, persecution, and genocide (estimates of the number of Roma killed by the Nazis and their allies range between a quarter and half a million), and these days, the Roma are probably still most widely known as "gypsies" - often as the butt of jokes, for example in movies such as "Borat".

*The Roma Journeys* provides an excellent opportunity to learn more about the Roma and about the conditions they live in. It does this through Cia Rinne's text, which for each country provide historical background, while also describing the lives of the people the authors stayed with, and through Joakim Eskildsen's photography.

This being a photography blog, regular readers might already be familiar with Joakim's work, which I linked to earlier. The book contains both b/w and colour photographs, the former in the form of panoramic ones, spread out over two pages (I personally could have done without those). Photographic subject matters range from portraits to still lifes to landscapes, all of them very masterfully done. I particularly like some of the still lifes (you'll know when you see them).

Because of its sheer size, *The Roma Journeys* requires patience, and one will have to come back to it. But as is the case with all great photography books, that's not a burden, it's something you want to do anyway.