

Joakim Eskildsen

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The Roma people can be a misunderstood culture. They are fictionally portrayed as gypsies, con artists and nomadic people. Through the photographs of Eskildsen we see a more accurate representation of this globally spread culture, which amounts to approximately 15 million mostly in the Americas and Europe. The Romani seem overall a happy and content group of people who are surviving by the ways of the old world. There is a sense of rejection to the “system” in their culture and defining a way of life separate from contemporary society.

Joakim Eskildsen’s book, *The Roma Journeys*, brings to us a portion of the visible Romani people of Hungary, India, Greece, Romania, France, Russia and Finland. Eskildsen spent many months at each place over the course of six years living as a guest in Roma family homes. The extended period of time he spent gives his photographs an honest and unexploited view of their culture and way of life.

Eskildsen’s photographs are nothing short of impeccable. His awareness of the natural light is just as obvious as his connection and closeness to the subjects he is documenting. The photographs do not scream for attention nor show an intense poverty that makes the viewer feel sorry for the subjects but rather a quite subtle calling for attention. This attention does not show a want for change or help but to simply show the truth. They reflect the people and their connection with each other and the land.

Many documentaries of poverty stricken parts of the world just show the pain, grief and intense poverty while overlook the happy and normal part of life. The normal part is exactly what Eskildsen shows. Every person and culture on earth has plenty of pain and grief; for a photographer to just focus on that aspect gives a skewed view of reality. Eskildsen’s photographs seem to represent so accurately and truthfully the Roma people it is difficult to believe they were taken by an outsider. In a world filled with technologies and convinces that are supposed to make our lives better and richer these photographs are yet another reminder that this may not necessarily be the case.