

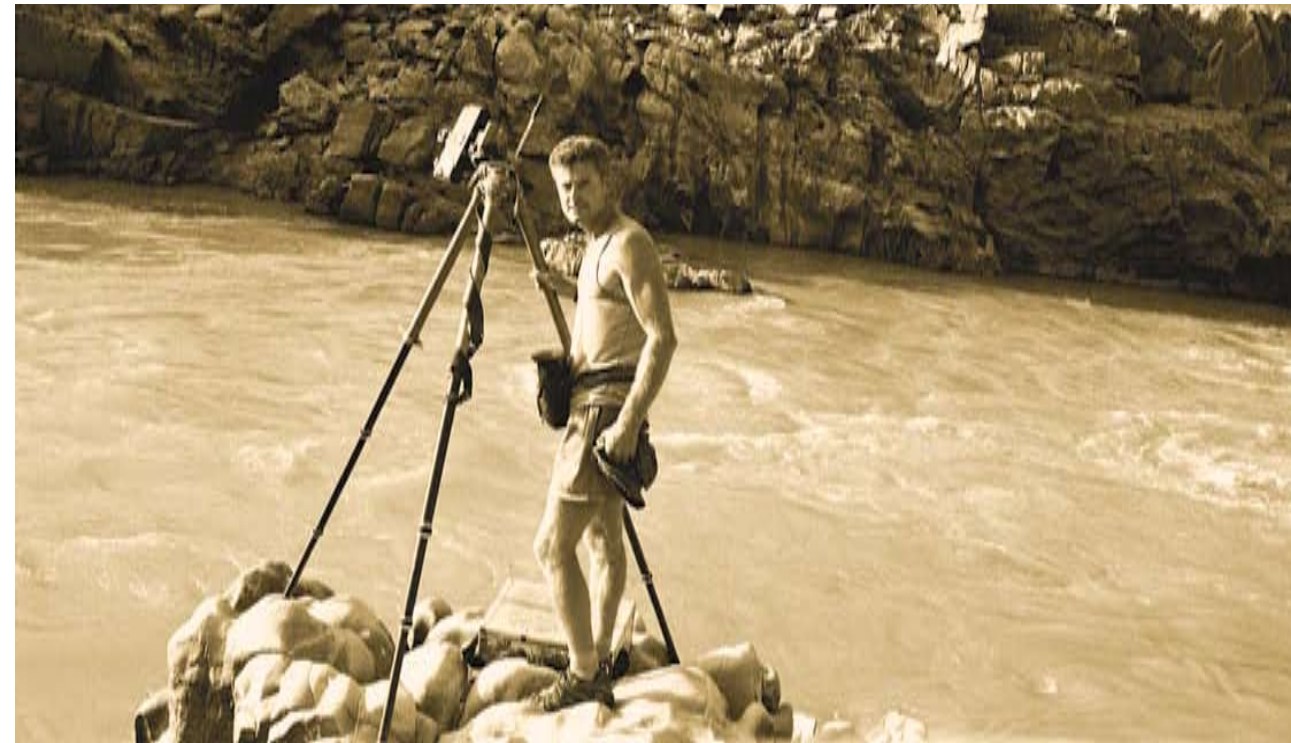
Koos van der Lende
Photographer - Artist - Purist

photographer,
artist -
purist.

Koos van der Lende

“I talk to
God
all the time“

When asked to summarise, in the briefest possible terms, his photographic excursions into the remote wilderness areas of Southern African, van der Lende does just that – he keeps it brief. “Twice a year for a minimum two months,”

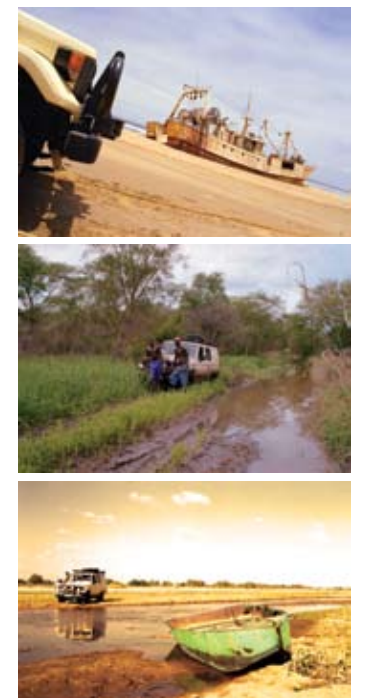


“I am totally removed from the living world. I can spend weeks at a time without seeing a single person.” Partly it is by design, Van der Lende choosing to travel alone in his Toyota Land Cruiser. But then again, solitude – and the stillness that accompanies it – is an unavoidable part of the landscapes he has been returning to since 1977. Practically, each of Van der Lende’s photographic trips is accompanied by a simple routine. He will ready his equipment, including his Fuji 6 x 17, medium format panoramic format camera. He will stock up on film. (“I only shoot on film,” he says. “I am a purist in that sense.”) Living necessities include a tent, two months of eating supplies and plenty of water. Despite travelling alone he takes no music.

This is because Van der Lende sees his trips as more than simply jaunts into the country; they are intensely spiritual journeys. So, maps aside, his only reading material is a bible. “I talk to God all the time,” he says. Once in an area he has identified as a potential subject he will preface the act of photographing it by an elaborate, almost scientific ritual. “I usually pack in three viewfinders to help identify compositions, a compass to calculate the orientation of the sun and a bottle of water – and then I start walking. I will walk as long as it takes, looking at the surrounding landscape.” This method, of purposefully scrutinising the complete mise en scène of a potential composition, also explains why Van der Lende rarely wastes film. Each shot is



formally planned to an exacting degree. In many ways, Van der Lende is like a motion picture director, his task defined by an elaborate staging of events. But this is merely the technical stuff. The stars of his show are the impressive landscapes and intervening objects he records. Many of these objects, especially when they are man-made, have a plaintive charm. This is evident in the picture shown here, of a rusting ship, stranded and long abandoned. He juxtaposes this photograph with more celebratory ones, hence the organic clarity of a tree he once photographed standing defiant against the wind. (see Fingerprint Collection, featured in this journal) Lit with the aid of reflector boards, the tree stands as an obvious metaphor for Van der Lende – a solitary figure negotiating a vast landscape. Exultantly, it should be added.



Yis

de Lende