

Pentti Sammallahti

Pentti Sammallahti is one of Finland's most important photographers....

... He was a teacher at the University of Art and Design in Helsinki before obtaining, in 1991, a grant from the Finnish state, which allowed him to give up teaching and concentrate entirely on art.

Sammallahti works within the classical black-and-white tradition of photography. His photographs are not documents of news events. As a photographer he is less interested in events than in the places to which he travels and the people he encounters. His approach is influenced by Henri Cartier-Bresson, from whose work he adopted the idea of the decisive moment, meaning the ability of photography to capture a unique

moment in the flux of time, and the importance of harmony and balance in composition of a picture. Recording the world, he has travelled through countries like Iceland, Lapland, Russia, Nepal or Japan, favoring those with cool climates similar to Finland. As a photographic globetrotter, Sammallahti leaves the beaten track in order to photograph remote locations, places where people still live in close contact with nature. While maintaining a distance which is both respectful of his subjects and necessary to capture any given scene, Sammallahti succeeds in imbuing his photographs with a sense of lyrical intimacy.

Possessed of a profound sense of humor, he is fond of taking pictures of animals with comical behaviors or in amusing situations. Sammallahti has a special relation to man's best friend and many of his photographs are extremely entertaining pictures of dogs engaged in living their doggie lives.

A great lover of nature, Sammallahti often combines the landscape with his portraits of people and animals. But he also pays tribute to nature's beauty in remarkable, highly contemplative landscape photographs. ▶ *Pentti Sammallahti was born in 1950 in Helsinki, Finland. He was a teacher of photography at the University*

of Art and Design Helsinki from 1974 to 1991.