



CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Capturing Neverland

Continued from page 5

contact Hope Village in Cairo because it had usually used art as a methodology to educate and rehabilitate children. By December, I had the necessary funds to secure my travel arrangements and the necessary equipment to come to Egypt and make it real.

AWAD: How did you choose the children? What was your process to communicate and to teach them?

KHAZEM: I interviewed about 24 boys and 7 girls using my video camera. It was more of a chat that I would later review rather than anything else. I did not tell them what I wanted them to do. After reviewing the interviews, I finally chose 7 boys and 3 girls, because the latter were less receptive.

The first few days were about teaching them basics like composition and framing using some disposable cameras. Then I started to show them how to capture live shots by making them act inside the frames in order to create a good image. I also taught them how the concept of a photo is altered when someone's figure is cropped or when a photographer points at a subject from a certain angle. In the days that followed, the children started to use digital cameras to shoot photos during field trips to the old market of Khan Alkhali and to the Pyramids where I gave them the freedom to shoot whatever they liked as long as their photos "can tell a story."

After I showed them some of my photos in addition to other photographer's work, they slowly started to develop their own style. For instance, one child, Islam is his name, started

to mostly shoot portraits. During the ten-day course, we reviewed and chose their best photos when we returned to the village. The children were very competitive. I also made them name their pictures and taught them how to explain to others why they chose such names. I also tutored them on how to write their own notes in some kind of daily journal. It was something they really loved because they never did that before. I guess children easily related to me because my age is closer to their age and I did not act like an instructor.

AWAD: What did you notice about their respective character?

KHAZEM: They were talking to me about everything but were most discrete about their background or how they ended up in the Village. They are also very clever, street smart, and full of life, but some of them were shy approaching subjects; they were reluctant to approach people. One day, I went to see them after we finished the course only to be surprised by their talents in putting on a show of dancing and singing for me! They really appreciate each other; calling each other, "brother" or "sister," and calling grown-ups, "mum" or "dad." This was one of the most important aspects of the project; in essence, the project lessened the fear adults had in accepting these children because the kids' approach of adults was not threatening. I met people my age who were fearful of these young children.

AWAD: What about the final photos that had been chosen for the exhibition?

KHAZEM: The kids took hundreds of pictures but one of them, Ramadan, was the most talented and he now dreams of becoming a photographer when he grows up. Eight of his photos will be featured among the



Sara Khazem with the children.

thirty pieces that comprise the exhibit. I can say all the photos have great composition and aesthetics. Most of the people who have seen them so far cannot believe they were really taken by young children.

AWAD: You were planning to leave by the end of January but you decided to stay in Egypt.

KHAZEM: I bought a roundtrip ticket because I was planning to make the exhibit and to return to the States thereafter. But I decided to stay in Egypt a longer time to work on other projects or to start "Capturing Neverland" all over again. Like the children, the country is vibrant and people are passionate about everything. I guess Egypt stimulates my senses in every way.

Born in Cairo, Egypt, Sherif Awad is a film/video critic and curator. He is the film editor of Egypt Today Magazine, and the artistic director for both the Alexandria Film Festival, in Egypt, and the Arab Rotterdam Festival, in The Netherlands. He also contributes to Variety, in the United States, and Variety Arabia, in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

ENERGY ISSUES

Indian Point Suffers Transformer Troubles Again

By ABBY LUBY



BUCHANAN, NY -- To avert a transformer explosion at Indian Point, like the two previous explosions over a year ago, Entergy decided to take the Unit 3 reactor off the grid last week because of transformer problems. The plant was back on line after a 36 hour, unplanned shut down. Entergy, the owner of Indian Point, announced that there was no release of radioactivity and no threat to workers or the public.

Officials here at the nuclear power plant had detected an increase in combustible gases such as carbon dioxide and nitrogen, which are needed to run the transformer, and which, if ignored, can be the catalyst for igniting a fire. Transformers take electricity generated by the plant - some 22,500 volts - and step up that voltage to a level needed to feed the electrical grid (typically 215,000 to 500,000 volts). Highly flammable



A new transformer being delivered to the Oyster Creek nuclear power plant, in New Jersey, in 2008.

oil, used to cool the transformers, has to be carefully monitored because mixing the oil with high voltage can cause the transformer to blow up. An option to using oil is the more expensive nitroglycerine.

Transformer problems at Indian Point are nothing new. A transformer exploded at Indian Point Unit 2 in November 2010, prompting Entergy to shut down the reactor for 17 days. A month later the 30-year-old transformer at Unit 3 exploded, closing that reactor for almost a month. In 2007 a transformer fire caused an automatic shut down of Unit 3.

"Plant workers monitor the condition of the oil, such as the temperature, salinity, contamination," said David Lochbaum of the Union of Concerned Scientists. "When problems are detected, one can either remove the transformer from service and fix the problem before it gets worse, or wait until the transformer blows up."

When Entergy took Unit 3 offline last week, NRC spokesman Neil Sheehan said the transformer would be swapped out for another auxiliary transformer.

Continued on page 7

