

# Charged With Life



«MY MEMORY IS OF A SENTIMENTAL KIND AND I OFTEN GET  
CONFUSED».

Photography by George Striftaris







Text **Maurizio Fiorino**

*George Striftaris is one of those artists you never get bored with. As multifaceted as they come, he gives value to every art form he engages in. He acts, directs castings, shoots, in a post-crisis Greece that is trying hard to get back to its old splendor. If it's true that real artists stand up in critical periods, with an uncontrollable desire to speak up for their age's distress, then Striftaris is one of those.*

*George comes from Arta, a small town in northern Greece. He's the only child in a family of many women, a parallelism that reminds me of Pedro Almodóvar, that lived surrounded by women and narrated and still narrates their lives as few can. But this is not the only thing the two artist - one Greek, one Spanish - share. Striftaris's art also speaks of freedom, although in a less gaudy spirit and using a more direct and brutal language. One must have freedom and inner purity to speak of such issues. George does it through nudes. In his photos nudity is never coarse: it's a yell for freedom that crosses and breaks the boundaries of what's allowed. His bodies, naked or dressed, often blend with nature, become one with it. His images are powerfully numbing: where is, in George Striftaris's work, the border between human being and nature? In the shutter's click, I would say. There are not many photographers that can set it off at the right moment. George can.*

**Do you remember the first picture you took?**

My memory is of a sentimental kind and I often get confused. To such a degree that I believe my last image to be the first.

**Digital or film? And, if you do both, what's the difference between them?**

Both digital and film, of course. Their fundamental differences are the medium, the processing, the economy of time and money. Digital photography offers so many shortcuts and possibilities nowadays, its evolution is so swift and exciting that I cannot remain indifferent to it. However, I consider myself lucky to have started out with film, because that is a great asset, both technically and aesthetically. It is my basis for observing the future, mixing grain and pixel. Playing with circles and squares.

**How is life for an artist in Greece at the moment?**

An artist's life is unique in any era at any place, as every person is. The world is dark and the universe unknown, and if you don't orient yourself according to the light, life can remain an endless labyrinth.

**Would you suggest to an artist to move to Greece?**

I'd suggest that he or she move anywhere he or she please. As long as they move.

**Do you ever consider moving somewhere else?**

Do you have another nest, beside my own, that might welcome me?

**If you close your eyes and you think about art, what's your first thought?**

I see crippled, broken white statues everywhere, looking at me. With lust and strength.

**What kind of child were you?**

I remember I was a very introverted, solitary child, yet creative and fantasy-stricken. For matters of survival, I made sure I appeared to be sociable, calm, a good pupil... but now that I think of it, I also enjoyed to be the leader. I also firmly believed that I was different. I'm probably still that way.

**What do you remember of your first camera?**

That it was plastic. And that the film hatch opened like a huge mouth about to devour me. Or was it an embrace? I don't quite remember.

**Tell me one of your favourite photos among the ones you took and the story that's behind that photo.**

If the stories behind images aren't secret, for both their creator and viewer, then what is their charm? Working for years as an actor, I've always believed that what's important is the performance, the stage, not the wings or the backstage. So there aren't any interesting, titillating or funny stories behind my images. Instead, I hope that my images will provoke interesting stories.

**When did you understand you wanted to take pictures?**

The first time I saw snow-capped mountains and black and white trees slowly appearing on the surface of a blank white piece of paper.

**Do you have a favourite subject?**

Stripping.



