



An interview with Andreas Deffner

Description

Andreas Deffner's photographs offer a fascinating window into the strange and distant world of the Andaman Islands, an archipelago in the Bay of Bengal about 670 sea miles West of Thailand and 150 sea miles South of Burma. This Indian territory supports approx. 250,000 people on 204 islands. One small part of the population is composed of the Karen; an ethnic group brought from mainland Burma to the archipelago 60 years ago.

Between 1999 and 2006 Andreas Deffner went to the Andaman Islands for weeks at a time. To not travel as a tourist, he tagged along with official trips by scientists, supported by Madras Crocodile Bank Trust, which runs a base camp called A.N.E.T. (Andaman and Nicobar Environmental Team) near Wandoor at the southern tip of South Andaman Island.

These trips with Dr. Rauf Ali, environmentalist, Manish Chandri, anthropologist and Harry Andrews, then director of the Madras Crocodile Bank, put Andreas Deffner in touch with local Karen people who work for A.N.E.T. running boats and assisting in scientific work. They allowed the photographer access to all of the archipelago (aside from the Nicobars which are completely closed off to foreigners).

Among the generous and very hospitable Karen people was one gentleman in particular who stood out. 70 year-old boater Saw Pauw, who as an elder had enormous standing in the community, opened doors in remote local villages and communities for Deffner. Due to the villagers' trust in Deffner, he was able to record unique native customs and ceremonial rituals.

courtesy: pondyart.org

Camera: Krishnaveni Ilanthirayan and Radhika Khanna

Editing: Krishnaveni Ilanthirayan

Guided by: Radhika Khanna

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