

# YOSSI MILO

## ANTOINE D'AGATA



**Antoine d'Agata's** (French, b. 1961) creates images that capture the raw and often taboo aspects of life. His provocative and visceral imagery explores themes of addiction, sexuality, and the dark underbelly of society. The artist's work is characterized by its intense and gritty aesthetic, as he immerses himself in the lives of his subjects, often revealing his own vulnerabilities in the process. His exposed and confrontational approach invites viewers to face uncomfortable truths and question their own perceptions of humanity. Through this process, d'Agata challenges societal norms and offers a glimpse into the complex and often hidden realities of the human experience.

In a world often driven by competition and spectacles, d'Agata offers a distinct perspective on art. For him, art transcends the realm of mere rivalry or entertainment; it becomes a sacred and privileged space. It is within this realm that he believes one can give radical shape and form to their unique perspective on the world. The artist's process emerges from accidental and uncontrolled processes. Over his tumultuous period of substance abuse, d'Agata embraces relinquishing control and ensures his final images are not mere illustrations or statements. Each image is, to some extent, independent of his conscious will, originating from his nervous system rather than his rational mind.

For d'Agata, this state of being, achieved through drugs and intense experiences, allows him to access a sense of annihilation and raw energy that transcends normal limits, which lead to the creation of his blurred images. This process is one he gradually learned to harness and control, discovering ways to utilize it purposefully and effectively. By embracing this blurred aesthetic, d'Agata was able to capture a different aspect of reality—one that goes beyond the sharp focus and clear delineation typically associated with traditional photography. The blurring serves as a metaphor for the chaotic and uncertain nature of existence, reflecting the psychological and emotional states that often accompany his subjects.

Antoine d'Agata has mounted solo exhibitions at Patricia Conde Galeria, Mexico City, Mexico; Les Filles Du Calvaire, Paris, France; and Magnum Photos, London, England, among others. He has participated in notable group exhibitions at the Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation in Eschborn, Germany; the Sainsbury Center for Visual Arts in Norwich, England; and the Thessaloniki PhotoBiennale in Thessaloniki, Greece, among others. D'Agata is the recipient of the Niépce Prize in 2001, the Overseas Photographers Prize in 2004, and the Rencontres d'Arles Author's Book Award for his book *Anticorps* in 2008. He has been a member of Magnum Photos since 2008. Antoine d'Agata studied photography at the International Center of Photography in 1990, and published his first book of photographs in 1998. The artist was born in Marseilles, France, and lives and works internationally.



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INTERVIEW

## An Interview With Antoine D'Agata

Famous for his raw, dark imagery, Antoine D'Agata reveals another facet of his creative practice: the workshop.

*Photographs by and interviews with Antoine D'Agata*

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*Antoine D'Agata is an itinerant figure: a photographer, a film-maker, a world wanderer, a member of Magnum Photos. As an artist, he is most widely-known for his graphic and intense images (some of which can be seen above). But during a brief sit-down with LensCulture managing editor Alexander Strecker at Paris Photo, D'Agata revealed some lesser-known facets to his personality. One of them is his dedication to the workshop format.*

*For the past 10 years, D'Agata has been traveling to the village of Siem Riep, Cambodia to offer photography workshops to children and young adults at no charge. This program is part of the annual Angkor Photo Festival and Workshops, which D'Agata helped start. Some of the workshop's alumni have gone on to become world-famous photographers. Other students were simply touched by the man's indelible, strong character and his infectious passion for the journey of photography.*

### **LC: Can you talk about the beginning of the Angkor Workshops?**

Well, I feel very attached to this area of the world, to the country, to the people. There were three or four of us at the beginning, about 10 years ago. It began, like many great things, as a project of love. For the first workshop, I had to go from house to house, looking for kids who might be interested in taking a course with me. I had to talk these kids' parents into letting them do it. Perhaps some of them said yes because I was offering some English along with the photography classes...

Now, each annual workshop draws about 40 students from around 15 countries. It remains a labor of love, since the workshops are free for the students. We do our best to ensure there are some local Cambodian students but the rest come from all over south Asia: Pakistan, Vietnam, Laos, Malaysia and so on. Our aim is to mix people, to mix energies. The workshop is such a powerful setting to experiment, to take risks. Many of the students return year after year—some have even returned to become workshop leaders themselves.

### **LC: Can you talk more about the students? Their backgrounds? Bringing together individuals from such diverse points of view?**

We try to choose the students from a very young age. The only thing we are looking for is engaged people who are willing to suffer to make photography. Recently, some of the most exciting student work I've seen came from Vietnam. The projects were focused on gay issues, a topic that is largely taboo in the country.

As I said, many of the students we choose are deeply impacted by the workshops. Some have gone on to successful professional careers—one of my students, Sohrab Hura, was recently nominated to join Magnum.

But beyond the student's seemingly different backgrounds, I think they share a lot more in common than they differ. Each student has to overcome local censorship or cultural limitations, but deep down, I find that they all have the same desires—culture matters very little. Since I require my students to get physically, mentally, politically involved in their projects, everyone is bound together by the intensity of their efforts. You have to let go to become involved with your work. During the workshop, we are in class for 8 hours a day and then the students have to shoot before and after class. It's dense, it's exhausting, it's prolific; the results are amazing.

### **LC: So, does teaching feel central to your practice as an artist?**

One thing that teaching has affirmed is that whether you're a retired businessman in Tokyo or a boy in the Rio favelas, the issues in all photography are the same: how to be yourself, how to express yourself, how to confront your own fears. I try to adapt to the students but really what I do is help them be themselves. I put my energy at their service.

That being said, if I could, I would not teach. Some part of me enjoys the process but this kind of involvement is also exhausting. I've had over 1,300 students in the past few years. I know most of them by name and I remain involved in their work and in their lives. This takes up a lot of energy to be so implicated in someone else's creative, personal processes. It doesn't matter if I'm getting paid for the workshop or not, it takes the same amount of energy out of me.

I also use these workshops to keep myself constantly moving. I haven't had a permanent address for over 8 years now. In the past few years, I've done 90 workshops all over the world. It's much more about giving myself a reason to keep moving than it is about the money.

During the workshop, I'm completely engaged. At the end, I ask the students to send me emails to keep me posted on how they're doing. But I never answer. Once the workshop is finished, I need to give myself space again. The space to find my own silence, to return to the darkness. This is essential for my process of working. There needs to be a line somewhere. After giving myself to the space of the workshop, I need to go back to my real world, my real life—the life of my pictures.

—Antoine D'Agata, interviewed by Alexander Strecker

# YOSSI MILO

## ANTOINE D'AGATA

b. Marseille, France, 1961, Lives and works internationally

### EDUCATION

1990 International Center of Photography, New York, USA

### SELECT SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2022 Virus, Mem, Tokyo, Japan
- 2021 Virus, Patricia Conde Galeria, Mexico City, Mexico  
Codex.Mexico, 1986-2021; Les Filles du Calvaire, Paris, France
- 2020 La nua vida, Arts Santa Mónica, Barcelona, Spain
- 2019 Eleven Voices, Belfast Exposed, Belfast, UK  
Oltre | Limiti Della Fotografia, Spazio fotografia, San Zenone, Reggio Emilia, Italy
- 2018 Self Portraits and Night Journeys, Magnum London, London, UK
- 2017 Codex, Centro de la Imagen Mexico, Mexico City, Mexico  
Corpus, Mem, Tokyo, Japan  
Corpus, Circulo de la Bellas Arts, Madrid, Spain  
Antoine d'Agata, MC2 Gallery, Milan, Italy
- 2016 Atlas, Les Filles du Calvaire, Paris, France  
Antoine d'Agata – Paradigmes, Galerie Les filles du calvaire, Paris, France  
Best off the wall on the gallery wall, Galerie Les filles du calvaire, Paris, France
- 2015 Aithō, Mem, Tokyo, Japan
- 2013 NÓIA, Les Filles du Calvaire, Paris, France
- 2008 Antoine d'Agata, Gallery.Photographer.ru, Moscow, Russia

### SELECT GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 Crusading The Specter, Yossi Milo, New York, NY  
In Ukraine, and Spilka present: Ukrainian Perspectives: Photography from 1940s—Now, Magnum Photos, New York, USA
- 2022 Journey at the End of the Night, MC2 Gallery, Milan, Italy  
There's no place like home, Magnum, London, England
- 2020 Open For Business: Magnum Photographers on Commission, Deutsche Börse  
Photography Foundation, Eschborn, Germany
- 2019 The Body Observed: Magnum Photos, Sainsbury Center for Visual Arts, Norwich, UK
- 2018 Quel Amour!?, Museu Coleção Berardo, Lisbon, Portugal  
Ray 2018 – Extreme:Bodies, Makk, Museum of Applied Arts, Cologne, Germany
- 2016 I Wanted to Be a Photographer, Fundació Foto Colectania, Barcelona, Spain  
International Art Paper, Galeria Carles Taché, Barcelona, Spain  
Best OFF the wall on the gallery wall, Les Filles du Calvaire, Paris, France
- 2014 MemoryLab: The Sentimental Turn, Gropius-Bau, Berlin, Germany
- 2011 Studio Vortex 2, Galerie Montgrand, Paris, France
- 2009 Workshop écoles internationales, Atelier De visu, Marseille, France

### FILM

- 2019 White Noise, d'Agata, Antoine
- 2013 Atlas, d'Agata, Antoine
- 2008 Aka Ana, d'Agata, Antoine
- 2005 El Cielo del Muerto, d'Agata, Antoine
- 20040 Le Ventre du Monde (The World's Belly), d'Agata, Antoine

### GRANTS AND AWARDS

- 2013 Rencontres d'Arles Author's Book Award, Arles, France
- 2004 Overseas Photographer Prize, Higashikawa Prize, Japan

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2001 Niépce Prize, Association Gens d'images, Paris, France

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- 2016 d'Agata, Antoine. *Codex – Mexico 1986–2007*. Mexico: Editorial RM, 2016.  
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- 2015 d'Agata, Antoine. *Index*. Roquevaire, France: Andre Frere, 2015.  
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- 2014 d'Agata, Antoine. *Antibodies*. Munich: Prestel, 2014.
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- 2012 d'Agata, Antoine. *Position(s)*. Avarie, 2012
- 2011 d'Agata, Antoine. *Ice*. Images En Manœuvres, 2011
- 2009 d'Agata, Antoine. *Agonie*. Arles: Actes Sud/Atelier de Visu, 2009  
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- 2005 d'Agata, Antoine. *Psychogéographie*. Paris: Le Point du Jour Editeur, 2005  
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- 2004 d'Agata, Antoine. *Stigma*. Marseille: Images en Manoeuvre, 2004.  
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- 2001 d'Agata Antoine. *Antoine d'Agata*,. Spain: Centro de Estudios Fotograficos, 2001.  
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- 1998 d'Agata, Antoine. *De Mala Muerte*. Paris: Le Point du jour (Cherbourg-en-Cotentin), 1998.  
d'Agata, Antoine. *Mala Noche*. France: En Vue, 1998.