



stephen wilkes

Photography, in the traditional sense, is about freezing a moment in time, but your *Day to Night* project is the opposite of that. Do you see this as a change in still photography?

One of the beauties of photography is that it has always evolved, and the outgrowth of that evolution

is that it's become an art form. Digital photography is a fantastic tool that allows me to tell stories in a way I never could with film. Once digital cameras got really advanced, I began to think outside the box in terms of where I could take photography.

This image from that series shows the Grand Canyon,

as seen from atop Desert View Watchtower. Are you able to pre-visualize an image like this?

I actually do see it [ahead of time]. When you do any type of art form for long enough, and you're passionate and driven and just work and work, you get to a point where you can see the image. Another great thing about

digital is that you don't have to define a frame anymore — my work gets defined by what I see, rather than by the dimensions of the film.

What do you like about this image?

The most important thing, for me, is always finding the human narrative. As I watched people climbing down from the pathways, I could see how

the Canyon kind of swallows people. Also, seeing light rotate into the Canyon creates this extraordinary feeling of depth.

Were you familiar with the Canyon before this project?

I did a story for *Life* magazine on the Canyon many years ago. But on that project, it was hard to capture the scale of the Canyon. Once I understood the visual language of the

place, it became part of my consciousness when I photographed it.

Would you describe yourself as a fine-art photographer? A storyteller? A historian?

I see myself trying to bring all those things into my orbit, but I'm most interested in being a narrative storyteller. It's most gratifying when someone reacts emotionally to my work.

Visitors take in the vastness of the Grand Canyon from near Desert View Watchtower on the South Rim. Stephen Wilkes made 2,282 photos at the tower over 27 hours, then combined some of them to form *Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona, Day to Night 2015*, which appeared in the January 2016 issue of *National Geographic*.
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