

# Angela's Black and White



## Angela Srisomwongwathana

took up photography as a hobby in 1985. After participating in the 'Art and Environment' Workshop in 1993 by German artist Nikolus Lang (organised by Goethe-Institut and Silpakorn University), Angela started thinking about photography as a profession. "I was then doing work related to computers, and I wanted a change.

I looked at myself, and then thought: 'if I don't do something, my life is going to be that way on and on – if I'm happy about it, that's fine; but I don't seem to be happy'." At the end of 1995, she quit her job and turned to the camera, and began to attend photography classes, the starting point of becoming a professional photographer. The free-lance photographer has taken part in several exhibitions, and has travelled to Australia, New Zealand, U.S.A., France, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, Nepal, Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Burma, and Laos.

"The feedback I received contained these feelings of peace and calm. You look at the photography, and there is a quietude of mind, and if you concentrate longer, you will feel the time and place of the photograph, with a sense of peace."





*'An array of wooden Buddha images'  
Wat Vi Xun, Luang Prabang, Laos*

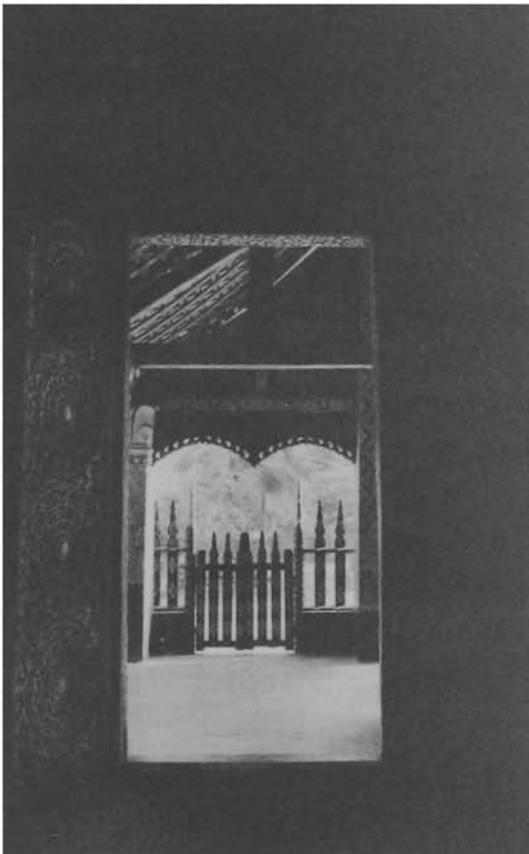


*'No Perfect  
Sacred beauty retained  
in broken objects'*

## **WORLD HERITAGE LUANG PRABANG**

Luang Prabang, the old capital of Lan Xang (Kingdom of a Million Elephants), was listed in 1995 by UNESCO as a world heritage site to preserve the unique character of the place, and prevent excessive tourism from ruining its charms. Located in a mountainous area where the Mekong and Nam Khan Rivers meet, Luang Prabang has been largely untouched by the modern world, leaving its people to live in harmony with nature. Historically, it has been the religious centre of Laos, PDR. While Phu Si, the hilltop temple, is the major landmark, Wat Xiang Thong represents the best examples of the Luang Prabang style of architecture. Wat Vi Xun is the temple where Pra Bang, the Buddha statue symbolising protective spirits in Laotian belief, was kept before it was moved to the National Museum.

*'A peaceful ambience seen through the entrance'*



*"The grandmother (old Woman) did not realize that she herself was being photographed. Five faces, each a different expression. So natural."*



*'Don't be shy...  
Shy kids and  
grandma in the same  
shot'*



*'Restaurant by the stream; enjoying meal by a running stream'*



*'Face on the roof  
... a detail'*

## **WORLD HERITAGE LIJIANG**

Lijiang, in the northwestern Yunnan Province of China, has been listed by UNESCO as a world heritage city (since 1997). Although it was partly destroyed by an earthquake in 1996, the UN allocated funds to restore its historical appearance. Situated in the bend of the Yangtze River, bordered by mountains and nurtured by rivers, the landscape of Lijiang is pristine and naturally beautiful. With the snow-capped Jade Dragon Mountain as its backdrop, Lijiang's lifeline is the Jade Dragon River (from this mountain). The ancestors of the Naxi minority, who settled along the rivers, had a custom of building bridges which was born not so much of structure as of culture. Apart from being a basic theme of the town's scenery, wood and stone bridges in different styles also serve as market places and stages to dance on. The town is vibrant and rich in traditions with a history of 1,300 years. Visitors will be fascinated by the architecture (of classic Ming and Qing Dynasties) found along alleys paved with five-colour stone slabs; the labyrinths lined with brick houses and old shops interspersed with streams and trees. Much of Lijiang's appeal lies in its historical value, natural environment and culture.



Old Town Lijiang  
Life style in the old town



*'Impression...ism  
Painted by the hand of nature'  
Lijiang*

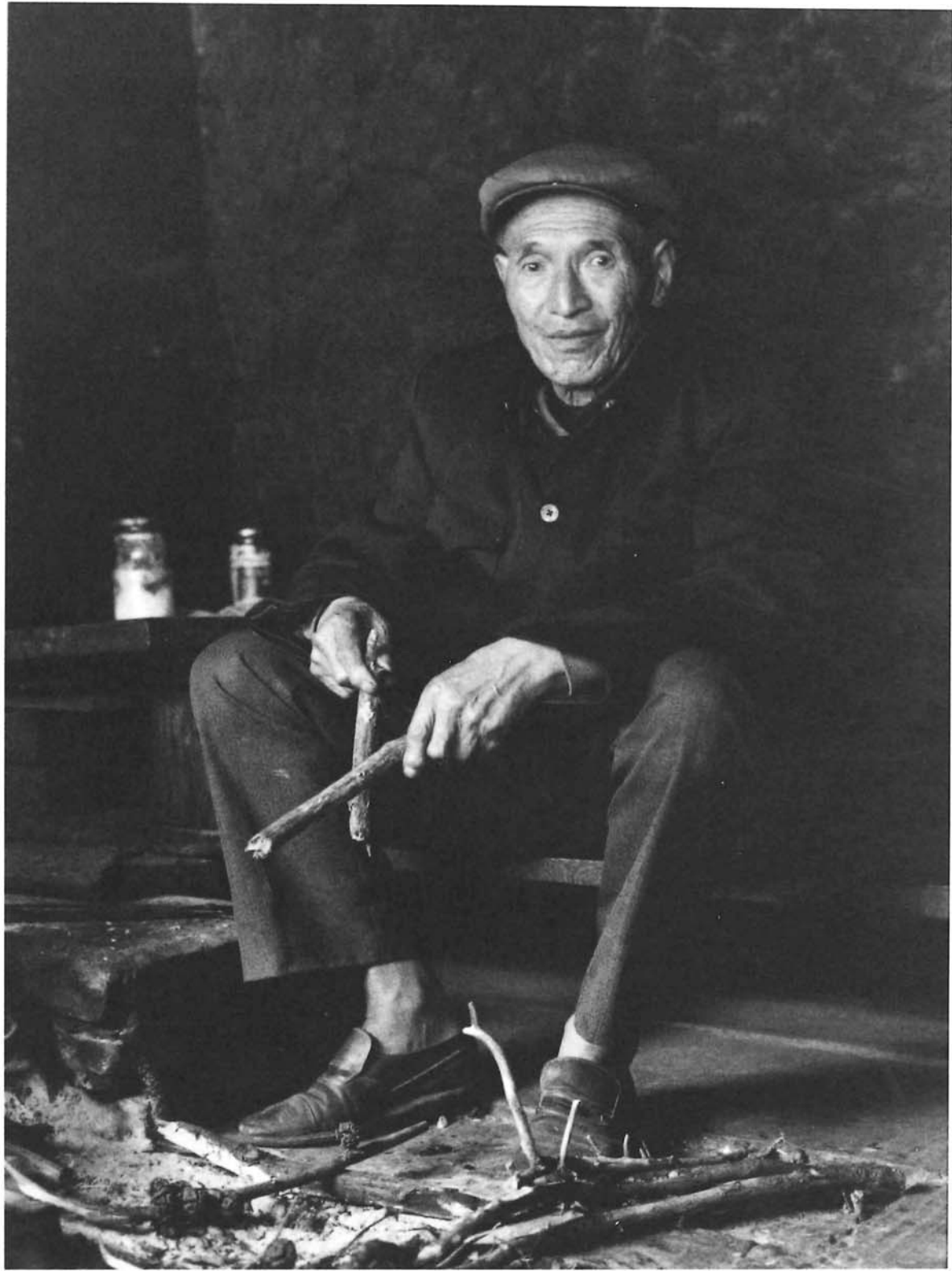
*"I just walked past the place, and at that  
moment, was struck by the reflection (of the temple)  
on the water surface."*

“There are deeper meanings to what we see and I like to draw those up.

I consider my work as follows: go to places; take a series of photographs, and once they are developed, I look through them and think about what I could do with them. I usually do not plan beforehand. I choose the less-planned way of just go, have something in mind, let things happen. I took only a couple of shots, and the outcome was this.

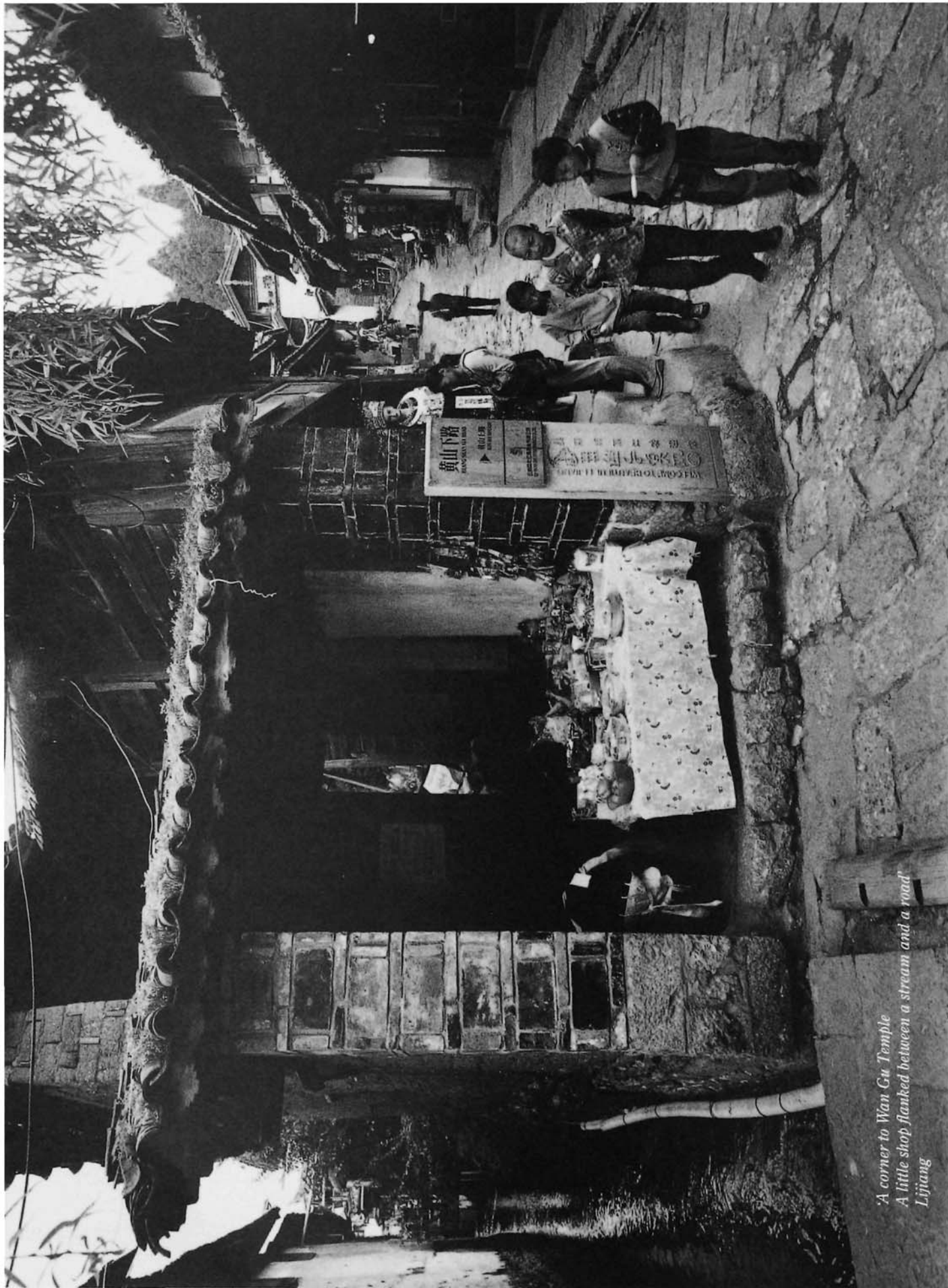
My photography is more concerned with art and culture. I find that people prefer the more straightforward ... of a view, scene, etc.; personally, I like abstract and conceptual work.

I have themes for my work that will probably take a lifetime. One of these themes involves the capturing movements which actually in turn reflect the changing of myself [photographing and the photograph becoming an introspective], from one stage to the other. Like human growth which involves ‘travelling’ from one stage to another. And when you grow, you are ‘travelling’... a lifetime of ‘travelling’.”



*Lijiang Elder  
Found in a simple house next to 500-year-old camellia tree  
Lijiang*

*"Taken in a very low light condition, reflecting old man  
living in a very basic way."*



*'A corner to Wan Gu Temple  
A little shop flanked between a stream and a road'  
Lijiang*





*'Capturing the Beauty  
Chinese artists are lost in their concentration'  
Lijiang*

“My father gave me his old Nikomat camera, after learning of my interest in photography. It was very heavy though (laugh) when I used it for my hobby. Now I use a light and little German camera, Leica, with range-finder and small lenses. It produces very good quality pictures, and is extremely handy. The good thing about using a small camera is that people don't think you are a photographer; they are natural when you take their pictures, with them thinking that you may simply be a tourist. I'm used to travelling and can't stay in one place for too long.

In terms of actual travelling, I have visited more than twenty countries, and from all these experiences, I'm now no longer perceiving my own culture as I used to, or as most other native would. I like to think of myself as a photographer who looks at her own culture with international perspectives, and then presents those points of view to the people of her country. This is a lifetime project.”

"Exciting but anxious. Yes. Different. I started from scratch, and I didn't have any connections in this field. I've thought about it: this is probably going to be my last career; to be good at one thing takes so many years, and fortunately for me photography had been a hobby before, and I know that I really like it, and would like to make a living out of it. As a hobby, it started with some friends, going out to take photographs of the city. I didn't know I would like it that much. I like playing ping-pong, listening to music and sometimes painting also, but I realise that photography is closest to my heart.

I like the work of photographer Angel Adams; he died in 1960; I think. His black and white photographs could be seen in many calendars, and his portraits of people carry subtle symbolisms; for example, shooting from the back of a famous pianist showing the musician's fingers at the keyboard.



*'Roof image on opposite wall'  
Lijiang*



*'Through the window  
View of the market square'  
Lijiang*

I like to continue the world Heritage work, which will be in Hui and Hoi An, Vietnam. I can feel something changing in me, and I believe it will show, though my photography, within this couple of years. The reason why I switched from colour to black-and-white photography is because colour photographs do not give me what want. I will not stop using colour but black-and-white takes you to the subject, the object itself without the distractions of colours."

*Group Exhibit:*

- 2001 "Recording Cultural Traditionals and Change", Chiangmai University Art Museum, Chiangmai and Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand, Bangkok, 2000
- 1995 "Art and Environment", National Gallery, Bangkok
- 1993 - 1994 "Artists & Social Commitments"

Third ASEAN Traveling Exhibition of Painting, Photography and Children's Art (Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei, Philippines, Thailand)

*Solo Exhibit:*

- 2000 "Movement...Still-Life...Enlightenment", Gong Dee Studio, Chiangmai
- 1999 "Luang Prabang", Gong Dee Gallery, Chiangmai
- 1994 "World Collage", The British Council Art Gallery, Bangkok
- 1992 "Flashes of Memory", American University Alumni (AUA), Bangkok



*'Shadow play'  
Lijiang*