FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

African Journey
Pete Turner
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"The year was 1959 and I was on my way to Capetown, South Africa, for an adventure that would change my life." In the language of a tale told many years after the fact, Turner describes the outline of a 11,000 mile trip that took him overland from the southern tip of Africa, to Cairo in the north.

The pretext for this encounter was a unique one. Still young to his profession, Turner was hired to photograph a seven-month journey being made by a caravan of forty-three Airstream trailers. Turner digressed as well, snapping pictures of people and places that, in a contemporary context, seem to belong to another time—before the intervention of the West and its ways. Also included in the book are photographs from return trips in 1970, and then 1995, bearing witness in a postmodern way to the arrival of less traditional motifs; the Mozambican women with white complexion cream smeared against the black of their skin, or the yellow metal hut near Johannesburg that replaced the standard thatched one.

The moody skies above the Namib desert, the primary colors of Ndebele wall paintings, and the arid earth are bright—bright as can be. Though Turner does not explain the photo process he used to achieve these brilliant prints, it seems he must have been free in his manipulation of the color balances, upping the cyan to deepen a textile, or the magenta that dramatizes a mirage in the Namib-Naukluft Park.

These images speak for themselves, though Turner wrote generous captions—a quirky glimpse into his personal impressions and feelings about each image. An introduction by Gordon Parks and an essay by Turner account for the only other text in the book.

Turner's love, and by extension, his portrayal of the African continent, is like that of a young boy's for his favorite team: pure and unadulterated. Without even a nod toward those that would apply a cultural critique, he has captured images that depict his grandest vision of Africa, which though beautiful, also bring to mind how much this place has suffered and transformed in the years since his documentation. For one thing, the wildlife he photographed with such awe and appreciation, is dwindling.

African Journey is surely meant to be a pleasurable trip for readers. Although it can also be approached as a reminder to preserve and respect what might be relegated to boyhood fantasies and pretty picture books.

Holly Wren Spaulding