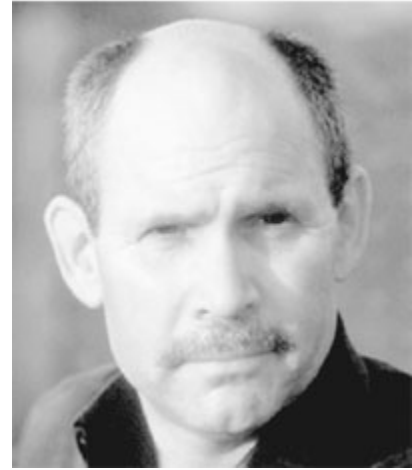


## Steve McCurry '74

Steve McCurry is quite simply one of the finest, most highly regarded photographers in the world.

He graduated from the College of Arts and Architecture with a B.A. cum laude in cinematography, whereupon he joined a newspaper. After two years he set out for India to freelance and begin his career in earnest. Spending the majority of his time in Southeast Asia, McCurry supported himself through his freelance work for a number of years.

However, it was his photographs of rebel-controlled Afghanistan just before the Russian invasion in the 1980s that brought him to world attention. Disguised in native garb and pretending to be mute, McCurry crossed the Pakistan border into Afghanistan to emerge into safety later with rolls of film sewn into his clothes—film that, because it contained compelling images that were among the first of the conflict, was quickly published worldwide. His coverage won the Robert Capa Gold Medal for Best Photographic Reporting from Abroad—an award dedicated to photographers exhibiting exceptional courage and enterprise.



Since then, McCurry has covered many areas of international and civil conflict, including Beirut, Cambodia, the Philippines, the Gulf War, the Iran-Iraq war, and the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia. McCurry's images of the devastation of the World Trade Center in 2001 are considered standouts in the documentation of that attack.

Says McCurry, "Most of my photos are grounded in people. I look for the unguarded moment, the essential soul peeking out, experience etched on a person's face. I try to convey what it is like to be that person—a person caught in a broader landscape that I guess you'd call the human condition."

Throughout his career he has put himself at risk to record images of every major conflict of the last twenty years: he has been arrested and chained in Pakistan, survived a plane crash in Yugoslavia, was beaten and nearly drowned in India by crowds at a religious festival, and was nearly killed by a Mujahadeen faction. He has been reported dead twice.

McCurry has won most of photojournalism's highest awards, including Magazine Photographer of the Year, awarded by the National Press Photographers' Association. This was the same year (1985) in which he won an unprecedented four first prizes in the World Press Photo Contest. He has twice won the Oliver Rebbot Memorial Award. In addition, he holds an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Fairleigh Dickinson University. In 1985, McCurry joined the international photography cooperative Magnum—a cooperative wholly owned by its photographer-members and founded at the conclusion of World War II by internationally renowned photographer Robert Capa. In 1986, the Philippines awarded McCurry the Medal of Honor for his coverage of its 1986 revolution. From Penn State, he has received the College of Arts and Architecture Alumni Achievement Award (1994) and Alumni Fellow Award (1999).

McCurry's books include *The Imperial Way* (1985), *Monsoon* (1988), and *Portraits* (1999). *South Southeast* (2000) won first prize in the book category of the Pictures of the Year

competition. His latest book, *Sanctuary* (2002), is an exploration of the temples of Angkor Wat. His work may be viewed in a number of permanent collections including those at Houston Museum of Art; International Center of Photography, New York; George Eastman House; Philadelphia Museum of Art; Fondazione Palazzo Bricherasio, Torino, Italy; Tokyo Museum of Modern Art; and Penn State's Palmer Museum of Art.

While his profession requires frequent and extended periods of travel, McCurry has made several trips to Penn State to present public lectures and spend one-on-one time with students evaluating their portfolios. He has also provided Penn State students with the dream internship opportunity of working as his assistant.

McCurry's work has enduring influence—his most famous image, that of the Afghan refugee with haunting green eyes, prompted worldwide concern for Afghanistan's women. In response, the National Geographic Society founded the Afghan Girls Fund to support educational development.

\*This career summary is excerpted from the 2003 Distinguished Alumni Awards Ceremony booklet (May 30, 2003, The Pennsylvania State University).