

Portraits Of People At Work Made A Photographer Love His Job Again

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By Alexander C. Kaufman

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NEW YORK -- Brian Doben says this is his magnum opus.

Three years ago, the 41-year-old photographer was jaded. Years of work on commercial photo shoots had left him feeling vacant and unfulfilled. He couldn't remember why he'd chosen his craft.

So he turned his lens to people who were passionate about their professions. And the "[At Work](#)" series that came of it, he says, revived his love of photography.

"It started from the need to get back to the basics of what photography meant to me and means to me," Doben, whose studio is in Brooklyn, told The Huffington Post. "I really want to show and appreciate what others have done and what they do and what they love to do."

The series started in Nashville, Tennessee. A celebrity photo shoot -- a typically cut-and-dry affair with little conversation or intimacy -- had left him in a funk, he said. Sensing how dispirited Doben had become, his wife of two decades urged him to go out and photograph some regular people. After all, his love of photography began when he started snapping pictures of classmates during college, she reminded him.

"I love portraits," he said. "I loved just photographing people -- not famous people, just people."

The quick artistic exercise ballooned into a project that has reshaped his career, Doben said. The artist has traveled to far-flung locales to capture people who are wildly enthusiastic about their work. In Mumbai, he photographed Bilal, a traditional elephant trainer called a mahout, standing on his colorfully painted elephant. In Tel Aviv, he snapped photos of street artist Rami Meiri dragging his paint brush along the wall of a building. In Tokyo, he took a portrait of Koji Ozeki, a tree-house architect, sitting on stairs that lead to one of his arboreal structures.

Doben's corporate clients have taken note, too. Since launching "At Work," an array of major companies -- including Microsoft, Apple, [Google](#), UPS and Samsung -- have hired him or purchased his work. On Thursday, he flew to London for a two-week shoot for British Airways.

Last week, when his 5-year-old daughter saw his suitcases and asked if he is going to work, Doben said he reflected on the new meaning "work" has taken on for him.

"'Work' can be a dirty word," he said. "But work, for me, is -- outside of being a father -- the most beautiful thing that I can be doing. I'm living life through the camera."

Aya, Maid Cafe, Tokyo



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Koji Ozeki, tree-house architect, Tokyo



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Ariana Liuzzi, mermaid, Las Vegas



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Shilpa Chava aka Little Shilpa, hat designer, Mumbai



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Teresa Mason, Eat Mas Taco Truck, Nashville



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Bob and Joe McClure, McClure's Pickles, Detroit



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Bilal, mahout (elephant trainer), Mumbai



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Kunio Kobayahi, bonsai master, Shunkaen



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Pashon Murray, Detroit Dirt, Detroit



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Nikki Lane, High Class Hillbilly, Nashville



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Phil Meteer, Terrafugia World's First Flying Car, Lawrence



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Tim Arnold, Pin Ball Hall of Fame, Las Vegas



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Rebecca Scholand, weather observer, MWOBS Mt. Washington



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Henry Borunda, The Greener Side, Denver



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Ben Wiener, managing partner of Jumpspeed Ventures, Jerusalem



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Enrique Cymerman, international journalist, Tel Aviv



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Rami Meiri, street artist, Tel Aviv



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Sheila Bridges, interior designer, New York City



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