

CHRIS RAINIER



Whirling Dervishes, Turkey

While we live with continued uncertainty as to what the future holds for us, for our families and for the world, life and work must go on. With traditional communities around the globe profoundly impacted by the pandemic, our work at The Cultural Sanctuaries Foundation has become ever more urgent and my photographic work to document threatened indigenous cultures has taken on a heightened sense of urgency.

The power of photography as a social tool also feels more clear. As I learned from the great Ansel Adams when I worked for him in the early 1980s, photography can change the world and indeed has changed the world. It is capable of shining a bright light of truth on the world's injustices and of acting as a catalyst for crucial change. Ansel's photography helped to save many of America's National Parks and wilderness areas in the 20th century. I try to follow that lead, working to document cultures threatened by economic duress, climate change and land degradation; cultures that are on the edge of assimilation or in danger of fading away from the weight of modernity.

At the very least, photography can serve as a reminder of what has been lost and as an inspiration to future generations to once again dance the dance of their elders, to wear the regalia of their ancestors, to don the mask of their ancients or to inscribe their body with a sacred tattoo as their distant relatives once did. It can also serve to remind us of the beauty of the natural landscapes around us and to give us new meaning and clarity.

My latest book MASK, published in the fall, was a celebration of the traditional rituals of mask wearing and mask dancing that I have been honored to witness and photograph around the world over the last thirty years. Now I am working on my next book SACRED, a collection of my images of sacred sites and landscapes, both natural and man-made from around the world. I am fascinated with what a culture considers sacred. What is sacred to a Muslim child, a Tibetan monk, a native North American teenager, a Christian elder, a Buddhist, an atheist, a mountaineer, a poet, an artist or a scientist? The book will explore this theme and, together with my photographs, will feature essays from some of the leading authors of the day discussing what is sacred to them.

It is my life's mission (through my own work as a photographer and the work of The Cultural Sanctuaries Foundation) to help to protect and empower traditional knowledge, language and culture - the very fabric of humanity, our past and our future. That is what is sacred to me.



Sun Mask, Burkina-Faso, West Africa

To hear and see more about the work of The Cultural Sanctuaries Foundation, please join me at one of the following in-person lectures (subject to the easing of restrictions due to the pandemic).

Image Alliance Photo Awards, New York City, October 21st 2020

American University Katzen Museum, Washington DC Museum exhibition and lecture January 2021

Dubai Exposure Photo Festival, Dubai UAE, February 10th- 13th 2021

The Royal Geographical Society, London, UK, Spring 2021

Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, Spring 2021

Lensic Theater, Santa Fe, New Mexico, Spring 2021

Aperture Photo Festival, Melbourne, Australia, August 14-15th 2021

Museum du Quai Branly, Paris, France, Fall 2021

Bowers Museum, Los Angeles, CA Museum exhibition and lecture October 2021

Website www.maskjourney.com

MASK ISBN: 978-1-68383-645-2

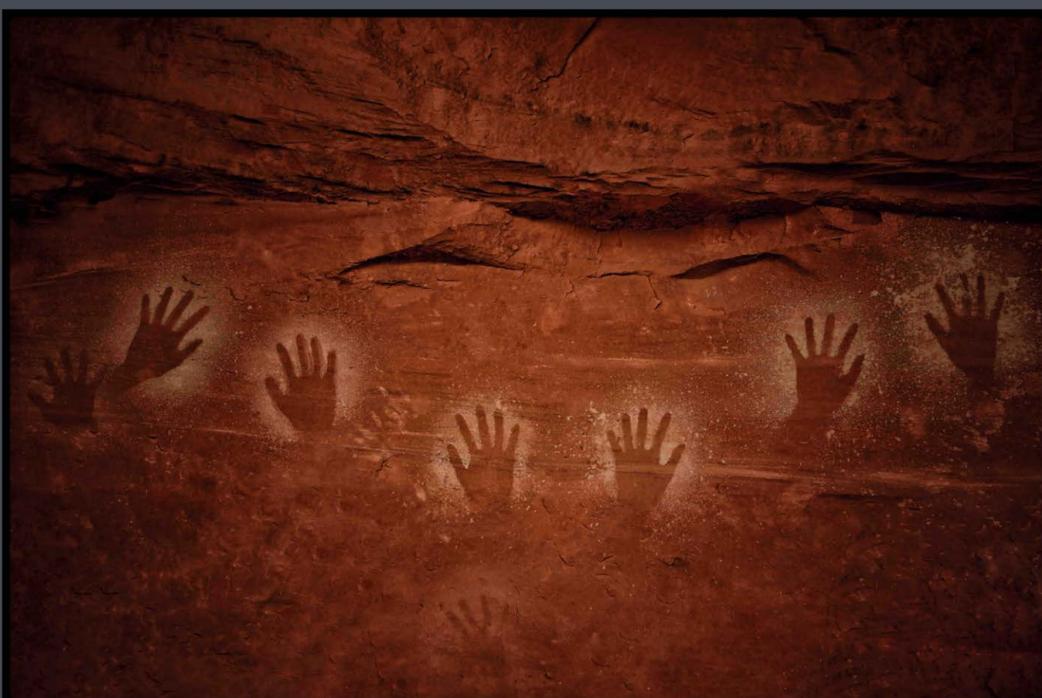


For more information on:

The Cultural Sanctuaries Foundation, visit www.culturalsanctuaries.org

My photographic work and lectures, visit www.chrisrainier.org

Or contact me at crainier2@gmail.com



Ancient Hands, rock art, South West Desert, USA