

Dane Captures The World

by [Angela Tkacz](#) on [JULY 17, 2012](#) in [WESTFIELD](#)



WESTFIELD – Longmeadow photographer Amy Dane isn't classically trained. She doesn't carry around a 10-pound camera with a huge telescopic lens, and she doesn't believe in a lot of editing.

Instead, Dane and her point-and-shoot digital camera travel the world capturing the faces of people in their most natural state.

"I've always loved to travel. People fascinate me wherever I go," said Dane, explaining how her passion began. Some of her favorite locations include Africa, Southeast Asia, and India.

Dane contributes much of her success to Bob Kadis. Kadis attended a talk she gave on Uganda in Springfield. Following the talk, he approached her and asked her to submit some of her photographs to an exhibit in Agawam. With nothing to lose, Dane agreed to contribute a few photos.

To her humble surprise, Dane's pictures were exceptionally well-received. From there, she started to look into other venues to share her pictures with the world. "[Kadis] is my muse, I'd have to say," said Dane, though she is still hesitant to call herself a photographer.

Dane believes anyone can take a great picture if they can find the right subject. "I encourage everyone to pick up your camera and play with it," she suggested. "If you like it, practicing develops your eye."

Revealing one of the secrets behind her highly personable style, Dane said she always tries to develop a rapport with her subjects. Despite possible language barriers, she always tries to gain their respect and trust.

"People tell the story of their country," said Dane. "I love to get close up and really into people."

Dane's photographs will be on display at Storrs Library in Longmeadow until August 15. The over 40 photographs that make up her "Cheering for Children" exhibit display the faces of children from 20 different countries around the globe.

The exhibit is dedicated to the memory of Dane's longtime friend and fellow Longmeadow resident Sheryl Beth Freedman, who lost her life last February to liver cancer at only 50 years of age.

Dane is adamant that the exhibit is not about showing off her work but teaching the children of Longmeadow about the people of other nations.

"Not all kids are rich, not all kids are poor," she said.

She wanted to demonstrate the spectrum of human life with her work. She will also be holding a talk on travel and photography for children later this summer.

"Six Foreign Festivals: Spectators and Performers," a photography exhibit by Dane will be on view for the month of August at the Jasper Rand Art Museum at the Westfield Athenaeum.

Approximately 40 color photographs will feature six festivals worldwide: Naadam in Mongolia; Timkat in Ethiopia; different Sing Sings in Papua New Guinea; Holi in India; Tschechu in Paro, Bhutan; and a Dogon Funeral Dance in Mali, West Africa.

Whether a particular festival is based on religion, ancestral tradition or athletic skill, Dane often finds the spectators just as interesting as the performers/participants. Many of these events double as the annual social event, bringing out the very young to the elderly. Festivals are "people-watching at its best. While performers may wear costumes and masks, fine velvet liturgical robes or adornments found in nature, spectators may range from wearing their colorful traditional clothes and jewelry to Sunday best to tee shirts and jeans.

The **Naadam Festival** in Mongolia features wrestling, horse racing and archery. Women athletes compete in all but wrestling. Games are held throughout the country during the midsummer holidays, but the biggest festival takes place in the capitol city, Ulaanbaatar, during the National Holiday from July 11-13.

Timkat in Ethiopia is a three-day festival beginning on January 19 celebrating the Baptism of Christ in the Jordan River. In churches all over the country, the *tabots*, replicas of the Ark of the Covenant, are removed from the altar and carried in procession to a nearby body of water. Throughout the night the priests and faithful hold vigil over the *tabot*. In the morning, the water is blessed and a ritual baptism takes place involving everyone who wants to take part. Finally, the *tabot* is paraded back to the church with pomp and ceremony.

In Papua New Guinea, **Sing Sings** are gatherings of one or a few tribes or villages

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to celebrate events and share festivities. Large or small, they take place often and everywhere. Young and old participate by playing traditional instruments, singing, making themselves up, and donning decorative costumes made from shells, animal skins, exotic bird feathers, grass, leaves and just about anything else that nature could possibly provide. With Sing Sings, there are no spectators – everyone is a performer!

Traditionally a harvest festival and also a celebration of the beginning of spring two days of **Holi** are celebrated in India on the last full day of the lunar month Phalunga, usually toward the end of February and into March. Propriety is disbanded and everyone goes wild as dyed water is shot from syringes, squirted from balloons and flung about in torrents. Age, gender, caste and social standing have no place during Holi. Nothing is sacred and no one is spared.

Religion and social life are inextricably linked in Bhutan and the best way to see the best of Bhutanese cultural is at a **Tsechu** festival. Tsechu commemorates the 8th century Tantric Master, Guru Rimpoche. Buddhist dharma is reenacted as both monks and lay people don colorful masks and costumes of both vengeful and compassionate deities, heroes, demons, and animals. The actors ask for good luck which the onlookers hope to receive.

The **Dogon** in Mali are an ethnic group which has kept their traditional way of life and remain largely non-Muslim. They are best known for their architecture, wooden sculpture, and religious traditions. Their mask dances are the highlight of their traditional funeral rituals, or *damas*, in which souls of the departed are led to their final resting places.

“Festivals really bring out the pulse of the culture and the best of all who participate,” says Dane, an avid traveler who has visited over 90 countries so far. Wherever she goes and whatever landscape, art or architecture she experiences, it’s the people who never cease to fascinate the Longmeadow native.

Dane also enjoys speaking to interested audiences about many of her destinations. If your group or organization is interested in hearing about far-flung corners of the world, contact Dane at amysteven@yahoo.com. For more information on Dane and her work, visit her website at amydaneadventures.com.

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