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See Photographer Burk Uzzle's Beautiful Chaos
The photographer was the youngest to be hired by LIFE Magazine



Brand New Highway, N.M., 1970

"He's conducted a visual love affair with America for years. Uzzle likes her funny face and doesn't want her to change a hair for him. He sympathizes with her bad moods, her tragedies, her rather glaring imperfections, her obstreperous beauty, her unlikely aspirations. He is as fond of, and amused by, a bush having a really bad hair day at the side

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of the road as he is of a tree that ate a bicycle and couldn't digest it." Vicki Goldberg, in the foreword to Uzzle's *Just Add Water*

While he is not a household name, Burk Uzzle deserves to be one. Born in 1938 in Raleigh, North Carolina, he was a working photographer by age 14 and, just nine years later, became the youngest photographer ever to be hired by LIFE Magazine. By 1967, he was a member of Magnum Photos, the great photojournalism agency of which he was elected president twice. He made iconic images of Woodstock, Cambodian war refugees, and the assassination and funeral of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Even though he has traveled the world, Uzzle insists he is still most drawn to small towns and everyday situations. And yet you won't find the expected or sentimental here. Uzzle's pictures are often complex visual puzzles, playful but sophisticated arrangements of space and light. There are moments of absurdity, surrealism and irony, but he is never unkind.

As Uzzle says, "These photographs are an appreciation of America. Their structure, like that of America itself, evokes a melody of movement and collage – not an explanation. Unlike documents, they play tag with layers of reality, both interior and exterior. America is like that, conditioning us to zigzag and change with its constant, energetic barrage of many and various realities. But there is a melody in all the movement, and I can only feel it in America."

[Burk Uzzle's new exhibit](#) Burk Uzzle: American Puzzles opens at Steven Kasher on June 11.