

SAVING THE WORLD

ONE PHOTO AT A TIME

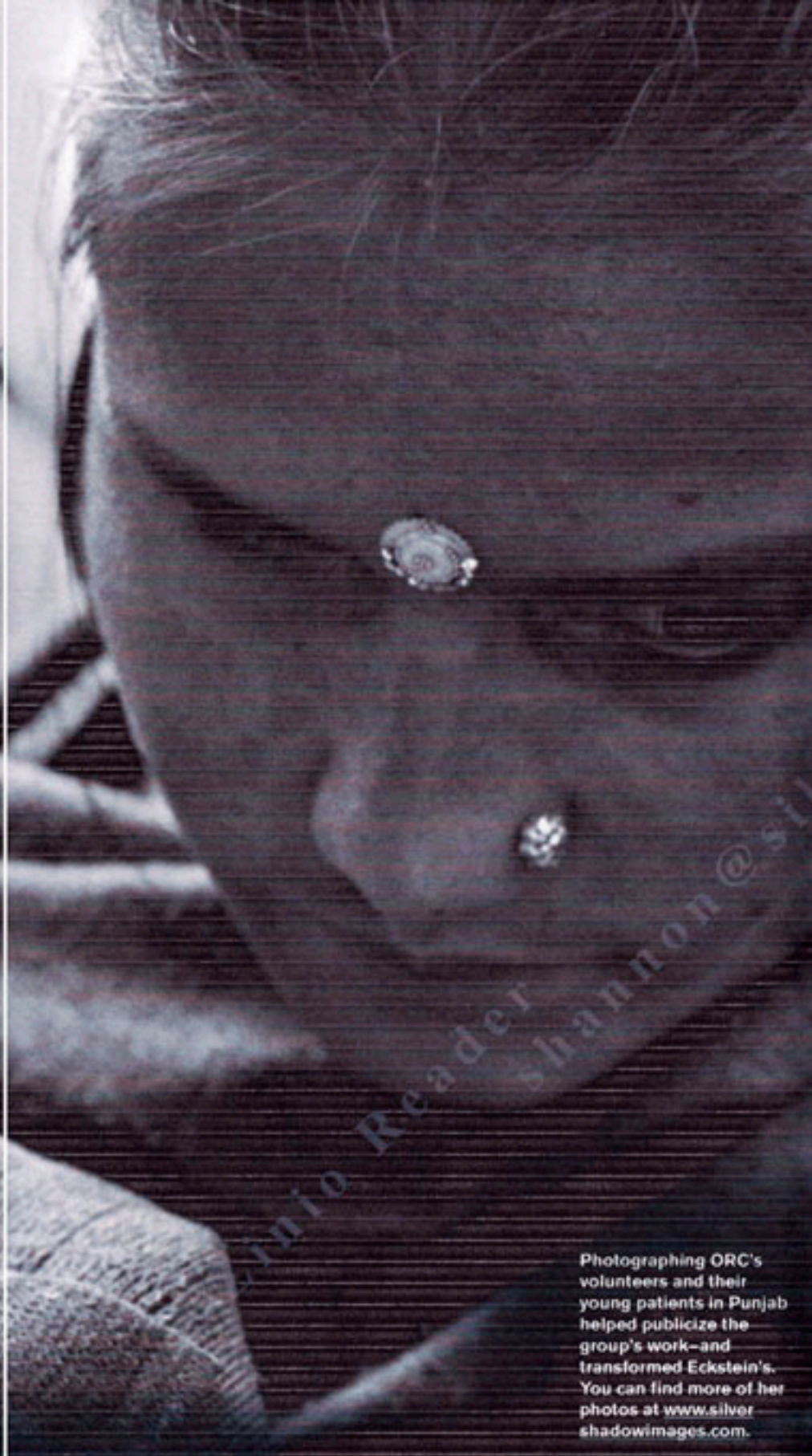


Shannon Eckstein photographed Operation Rainbow Canada's volunteer medical pros as they provided free reconstructive facial surgery for Punjabi children.

It can be a pretty decent hobby and a reasonably rewarding career. But photography has a remarkable ability to be more than that—to be a force that moves people.

The history of photography from its earliest days is filled with photographers who have used that power to spark reform in urban slums or to save endangered creatures and their habitats. Think of Jacob Riis, whose 1890 book, *How the Other Half Lives*, led to the closure of police-run poorhouses in New York City. Or William Henry Jackson, whose pioneering landscape photographs helped spark the creation of the world's first national park, Yellowstone, in 1872.

This tradition is stronger than ever today. We talked with three photographers who take very different kinds of pictures and champion very different causes. What they have in common: an ability to use their cameras to heal the world. Their work and stories are on the pages that follow. And for some ideas about what you can do, turn to page 110.



Photographing ORC's volunteers and their young patients in Punjab helped publicize the group's work—and transformed Eckstein's. You can find more of her photos at www.silvershadowimages.com.

SHANNON ECKSTEIN



SOMETIMES THE CALL TO ACTION COMES over the phone. For Shannon Eckstein, a Canadian photographer who's currently based in Toronto, the voice on the phone was a friend asking her to volunteer to shoot portraits at a gala benefit for a nonprofit organization.

Eckstein resisted, but the friend pressed her. She dutifully photographed at the benefit for Operation Rainbow Canada, whose medical teams provide free surgery and health care for children in developing countries born with cleft lips and palates.

She wasn't thinking of a long-term relationship. But as Eckstein learned about the group and ran into its founder, Dr. Kimit Rai, a local plastic surgeon, repeatedly at various events, she started thinking about her own work. Her business, photographing children and producing high-quality black-and-white prints, was successful and rewarding, but she wanted to go beyond that. "I just felt like I needed to do more with [photography]," she says.

So Eckstein approached ORC with a proposition: She would go on one of their missions to photograph and use the images to publicize their work. "They hadn't received a lot of media attention, and I just knew I could handle the job," says Eckstein. "It involved children, in a third-world country in which I had a lot of experience living and traveling. And it was a story that I thought hadn't been told, and needed to be told, but in a gentle way."

The organization agreed. To pay her way, Eckstein raised money through a benefit party of her own. Soon she was off on the multiweek trip to a border town in northern India with 24 other members of Operation Rainbow. Getting there took three days.

Families from all over the region brought their children, and Eckstein came prepared. She had a ready smile, lots of time, and child-friendly goodies like stickers and bubble-blowing materials. Unlike the nurses, who might only see the kids in pre-op or post-op areas, she could follow the kids and their families through the whole process, getting to know them. Eventually the nurses realized they could call for their photographer to help settle a nervous child.

The trip, she says, "exceeded every expectation I had. The ORC team was incredible to work with. Every day they humbled me because of their incredible spirit, sense of team, and dedication to what they were doing."

Two of Eckstein's prints were accepted into an Australian photo competition, Women's Eye on Peace, and she's hoping to do similar work for other organizations. "I just feel like I need to do something a little more socially conscious," she says. "I don't have a lot of money and I don't know what else to do. Photography is the only thing I have to offer."