

*For Kyle Cassidy. Thank you for everything!*

Images from the  
**Uruguayan  
Countryside**

**by Javier Odriozola**

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In the summer of 2008 I found myself with a very nice camera lens I hadn't used in three years - a lens that should be with a person making photos and not in a box in my closet.

I was looking for someone with talent, and drive, and opportunity, which is how I met Javier who, amazingly enough, had only been taking photos for six months -- and with borrowed cameras. The images he'd produced in that short span of time made it obvious that he was the right person.

I'll probably, and now I realize, sadly never be to Santa Lucia, Canelones, but looking at "Kid with Bicycle" I feel for a moment that world popping into reality -- hold my breath -- stare, I can feel that street wrap around me and that sharp image becomes, for a brief second, a fuzzy moment of reality in three dimensions, I can imagine the words, the emotions, the day -- I'm left feeling as though I was there, long ago, at that moment -- that his memories are mine, that these images are my hazy recollections.

The inevitable truth, the perfectly captured decisive moment in Javier's "Quiet Afternoon on the Town's Square" is worthy of Ruth Orkin or Henry Cartier Bresson - Javier knows where to be, how to get there, and how to be, somehow, invisible.

The one thing I'm left with -- the thought that overpowers all others when I turn to the final page of this book is I wish I had been there, on this grand adventure. But I'm happy enough that I was able to send an emissary -- a lens no longer unused in a box, but loved and put to work creating wonderful, lingering things -- for everyone.

***Kyle Cassidy***

*Philadelphia January 2010*



There's no doubt in my mind that the presence of the XO's' modified the urban and rural landscape of Uruguay.

To the inherent democratic and educational value of such a tool (in Uruguay, each student of every public school was given one for free by the government) we must add a hidden benefit: Since schools and town squares were equipped with open Wi-fi hotspots, the children, and some adults, flock to the squares in order to take advantage of the free connection.

So they are accessing a powerful and empowering tool and at the same time, mingling with each other and more senior citizens, further reinforcing the social fabric that bind town's together.

Surfing the web in the town's square.  
Velázquez, Rocha.





Surfing the web in the town's square.  
Velázquez, Rocha.



Bolosinas  
Papelería  
Regalos

MAREL







Kids being themselves.  
Migues, Canelones.



Padding club Aguas Corrientes, Canelones.





Kid with bicycle.  
Santa Lucía, Canelones.



Local open market.  
Santa Lucía, Canelones.

Quiet afternoon on the town's square.  
Minas, Lavalleja.









# The street

In Uruguay, most towns follow a very similar pattern, squares are alike, architecture is coherent and even the layout is almost the same with its narrow streets, even narrower sidewalks, some cobblestone, and the church, police and the bulk of the urban life centered around the square.

However, each town has its own personality, something that makes it unique, it might be a special feature (like Colonia del Sacramento old town) or the social activity.

There's both continuity and variation which makes it interesting to visit and the street is the place where you can take the town's pulse.





A mate drinking passer-by  
Santa Lucía, Canelones.

Opposite: Local open market  
Santa Lucía, Canelones.



Open market merchant's truck  
Santa Lucía, Canelones.



Car cleaning day  
Migues, Canelones.



Historical neighbourhood  
Colonia del Sacramento, Colonia



Studebaker





Bicycle parking space. Las Piedras, Canelones.





Doors are always unlocked in the more quiet towns  
Carmelo, Colonia.



Motorist  
Carmelo, Colonia.



Wandering girl. Parque del Plata, Canelones.



Commuter. Parque del Plata, Canelones.



Open market  
Parque del Plata, Canelones.



Waiting for the bus. Parque del Plata, Canelones.



Roasted peanut vendor. Cardal, Florida.





Hot dog stand. Minas, Lavalleja.



Fresh fish market  
Punta del Este, Maldonado.



Rope gliding  
Salto del Penitente, Lavalleja.



## Free time

There's a lot of elder people in Uruguay, in fact people older than 65 accounts for more than 13% of the total population.

Common ways of spending retirement time in the Uruguayan countryside includes playing cards (truco) or "casín" (a game similar to pool) in small bars, called "boliches", bingo nights, and of course drinking, socializing and gossiping in general.

There are some games to be played in the open such as "bochas" where each player throws a ball trying to approximate to a target while keeping the opponent balls away.





Both pages: Playing "truco", Libertad, San José.



The atmosphere at a "boliche".  
Cardal, Florida.











Previous and current spread: Playing "Casín"  
**Velázquez, Rocha.**





Opposite: Toy lottery drum used to pick the numbers  
Parque del Plata, Canelones.



Bingo Night: Waiting for the luck  
Parque del Plata, Canelones.





Bingo Night: Writting the ticket  
Parque del Plata, Canelones.





Bingo Night: Someone else is claiming a prize  
Parque del Plata, Canelones.





Young couple by the sea. Punta Ballena, Maldonado.

Watching boats at the promenade. Punta del Este, Maldonado.







## Without people

Desolate settings had always fascinated me, the absence of man can be as significant as its presence.

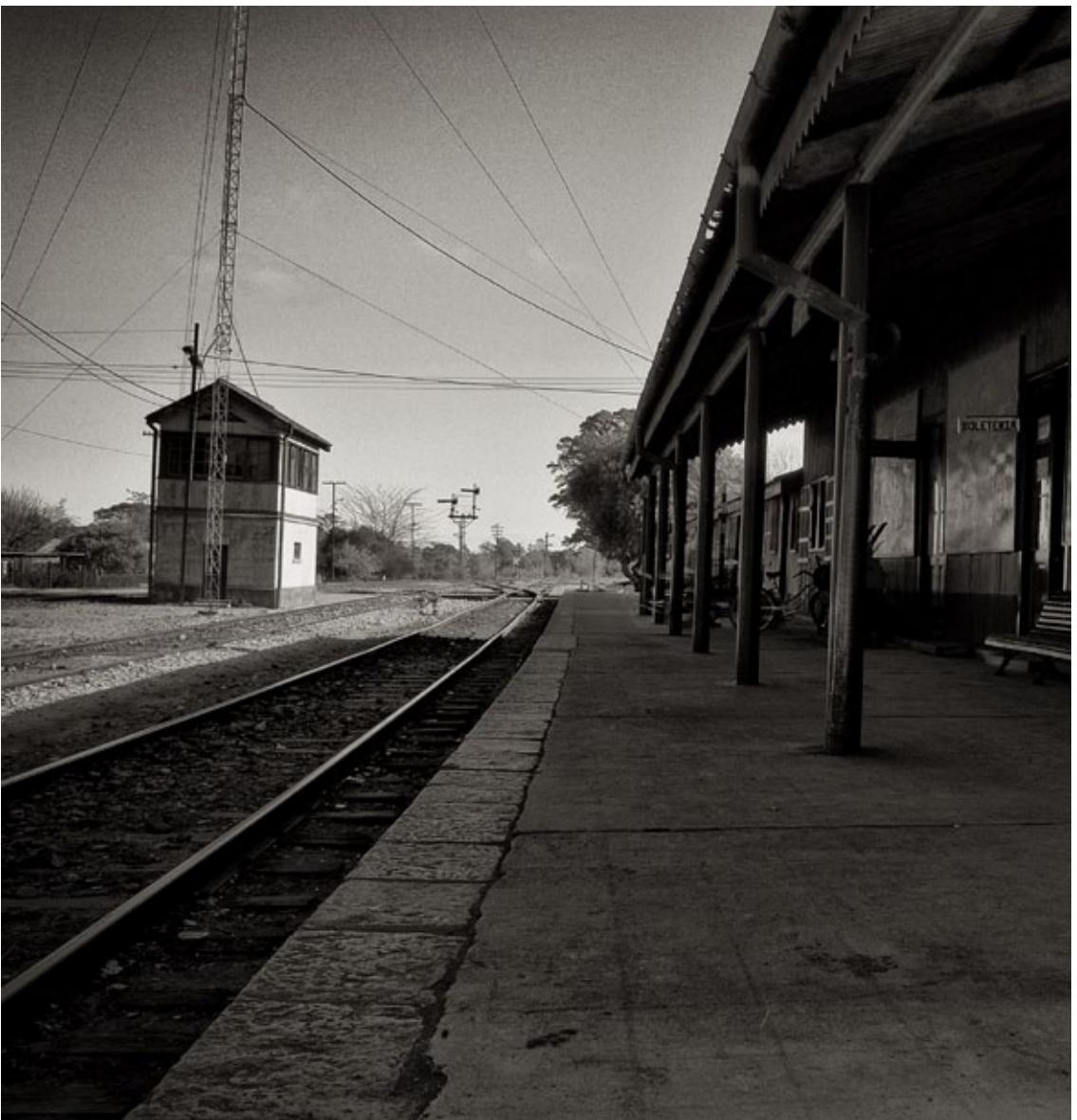
Uruguayan countryside towns are very small in population so there's a lot of chances of stumbling with an unpopulated space.

Then it's the time for a different kind of photography where the rush of capturing a fleeting moment or gesture gives way for a more meditative, studied composition.

People is so prominent an element in a photograph, that the background is often disregarded, thus this kind of photography is a great way to focus on the town itself, its textures and its unique characteristics.



Old train bridge. Somewhere near the border between Florida and Canelones



Train Station. 25 de Agosto, Florida.









Train Station  
25 de Agosto, Florida



Historical neighbourhood  
Colonia del Sacramento, Colonia.

# About this project

I live in a country with an inferiority complex, we are geographically placed between two of the world's largest countries, with huge populations, huge metropolis and huge economies.

In contrast our country is mostly grass, with only one real city and a network of scattered small towns. Population? Well, let's just say that there are ten times more cows than people here.

Despite all of this, or shall I say, because all of this my country is a beautiful place to live.

In a world that's spinning faster and more crazy each day, you can find real peace of mind, real sanity in the Uruguayan countryside, and even Montevideo is peaceful compared with most other capitals.

So this book's goal is an ambitious one: I want to show both my self-diminishing fellow country men and everyone else on this world, the charms of Uruguay and it's people.

As you learned on the foreword, this book was born thanks to a generous and great idea, had by a very good spirit: Kyle Cassidy.

He gave me two things I needed: Anyone that ever toyed around with photography can agree that we're always hungry for equipment, always feeling that we need some mythical lens or flash that would bring the possibilities to produce the images we want.

When I saw Kyle's post about giving that particular lens I thought to myself that I got to had it, so I put myself to the task and in the end I got the lens, but also something else I needed very bad: A direction. A path to creating images in a certain way.

To that day I had only taken images without thinking about the why's and the how's. Individual photographs not framed in a particular project or goal.

Thanks to Kyle's idea now I can close this project and, I hope, have a complete and coherent piece of work to show the world.

That's worth a lot more than any piece of equipment, at least to me.

***Javier Odrizola***  
*Parque del Plata, January 2010*