

What Makes a



Memorable Image?



By Irfan Ahmad, BDS

Some of the images indelibly etched into our collective cultural consciousness include the giddy joy of the embracing sailor and nurse in “V-E Day in Times Square,” Muhammad Ali’s triumphant reaction in “Muhammad Ali vs. Sonny Liston” (Neil Leifer), and the pain and anguish in “Soweto Uprising” (Sam Nzima). What do these pictures have in common? Is it the subject, is it the photographer, or is it the camera? Of course, all these elements play a part in creating such iconic images. But there is one aspect that is common to them all—spontaneity.

To recreate these images would be virtually impossible—they represent a precise moment in time, captured at the right time, at the right place. It is these qualities that make them unique; they are irreproducible. The most striking and unforgettable imagery is an impromptu, spur-of-the-moment depiction of an event that conveys and evokes thoughts and emotions.

Sight is the pinnacle of the senses, and most of our perception is based on the visual medium in the form of symbols, paintings, or photographs. It elicits responses that determine our behavior, attitude, and decisions. Dental esthetics is a prime example in that it relies mainly on what is seen, with the other senses playing little or no part. A smile can open doors, convey warmth, and express compassion and passion. No other medium compares to the power of visual impact.

The image on the cover showing application of a dentin bonding agent onto the intaglio surface of a ceramic crown may appear staged but is in fact a spontaneous shot. It captures a droplet suspended in time that is difficult or impossible to reproduce, making it unique. To create a visual “myth” involves spontaneity, capturing the moment—it may never come again.

Cover image photographer: Irfan Ahmad, BDS (North Harrow, UK). Camera: Leica S2 with an APO-Macro-Summarit-S 120-mm f/2.5 lens (Solms, Germany).

Please turn to page 26 to read Dr. Ahmad’s cover feature article.

“Image and perception are everything, and those who possess them have the ability to determine their own myth, to be taken at their own valuation.”

— Christopher Hitchens