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These Photos Reveal the Importance of Human Compassion

The "Apapachos" series reflects on the power of social interactions.

By [Stephan Ach](#)



Apapachar is a word of Nahuatl origin that describes the relevant human impulse to “care, touch, spoil, heal, and embrace with the energy of the heart and soul.”

This series is the organic result of an exploration around the rites of human embracing and compassion. It is meant to capture diverse individuals, each bound by different relationships and emotions.

The concept of Apapachar is not new. From the paintings from renaissance era to the work of contemporary video artist Bill Viola, the idea of greeting and embracing represents one of the most human, and most honest forms of social interaction.

The embraces in the photos are not staged or planned. They reflect the authentic emotion of physical contact — from passion, to excitement, to tenderness, to rejection — our bodily language speaks its own language.

These minimalistic portraits reflect the profound, simple, and yet rich shades of human emotion in its primal state. Each photo is meant to demonstrate the powerful sense of touch that echoes the embracing of the human soul.









Stephan Ach

Born in West Germany to a family of theatre actors, Stephan was exposed to the art world from early on, experiencing the fantasy, adrenalin and eccentricity of the stage. During his time at art school, his preference for the lens over the brush led him to discover his true talent—photography as a form of artistic expression. By the time he graduated from the School of Art and Photography of Munich in 1982, he had compiled an extensive portfolio that landed him in the fashion world, working between New York, Paris, Munich, Barcelona and Miami, among other cities. In the year 2000, he decided to explore cinematography and enrolled in the New York Film Academy, complementing a lengthy career that has not only taken him through the fashion world, but also to share his artistic vision of what he calls “the magic of life.”

Stephan Ach explores the world in search of the unknown; that which exists behind our visual reality. His photographs capture fleeting moments that reflect a unique experience; “realities that I don’t look for, but that find me,” he describes. His work reflects elements of surprise that he encounters in different settings: flexibility, softness, warmth, expressivity and the amazing landscapes of Latin America, where he has shot the majority of his most recent series.



“People look for retreats for themselves, in the country, by the coast, or in the hills . . . There is nowhere that a person can find a more peaceful and trouble-free retreat than in his own mind. . . . So constantly give yourself this retreat, and renew yourself.”

- MARCUS AURELIUS

