



Rittenhouse Square

Laurence Salzmann

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One could say that I grew up in the shadow of Rittenhouse Square. I spent a good part of my childhood there. My parents' house nearby on Pine Street made the Square quite accessible. My mother told me that I was first taken there in a pram in February of 1944.

My older brother who used to tell tall stories told me that at one time the Square was surrounded by the seas and that pirates had buried their treasures there. He produced a pirate's map for me, which indicated a treasure, buried right at the center of the square next to a large tree. I spent a day digging by that tree. Needless to say I never found the treasure but did succeed in creating a big hole.

The square was for me a source of endless surprises and fun. I sailed my sailboat to far away shores in the Square's pond; I learned to ride my two wheel bike there; I eagerly awaited the annual flower show to buy a lemon with a candy stick; I remember park guards chasing our group of unruly boys after we had pelted the guard kiosk with snow balls.

After so many years, the square seems almost unchanged. For someone who grew up in the area what has changed most is not the park itself but the blocks that surround it with all their new apartment and office buildings. Gone are the large mansions that surrounded the square and the Number 17 trolley that wound its way around it.

In her later years, my mother made a habit of sitting out in the square everyday with a group of friends. Roles were reversed: when I was a child, my mother would leave me to play in the square while she went out to do her shopping; now as an adult, I came to visit here while she gossiped with her friends in the park.

Over the years, I have roamed far and wide from Philadelphia but the square still remains a familiar harbor to which to return, where friends and memories wait to be rediscovered.

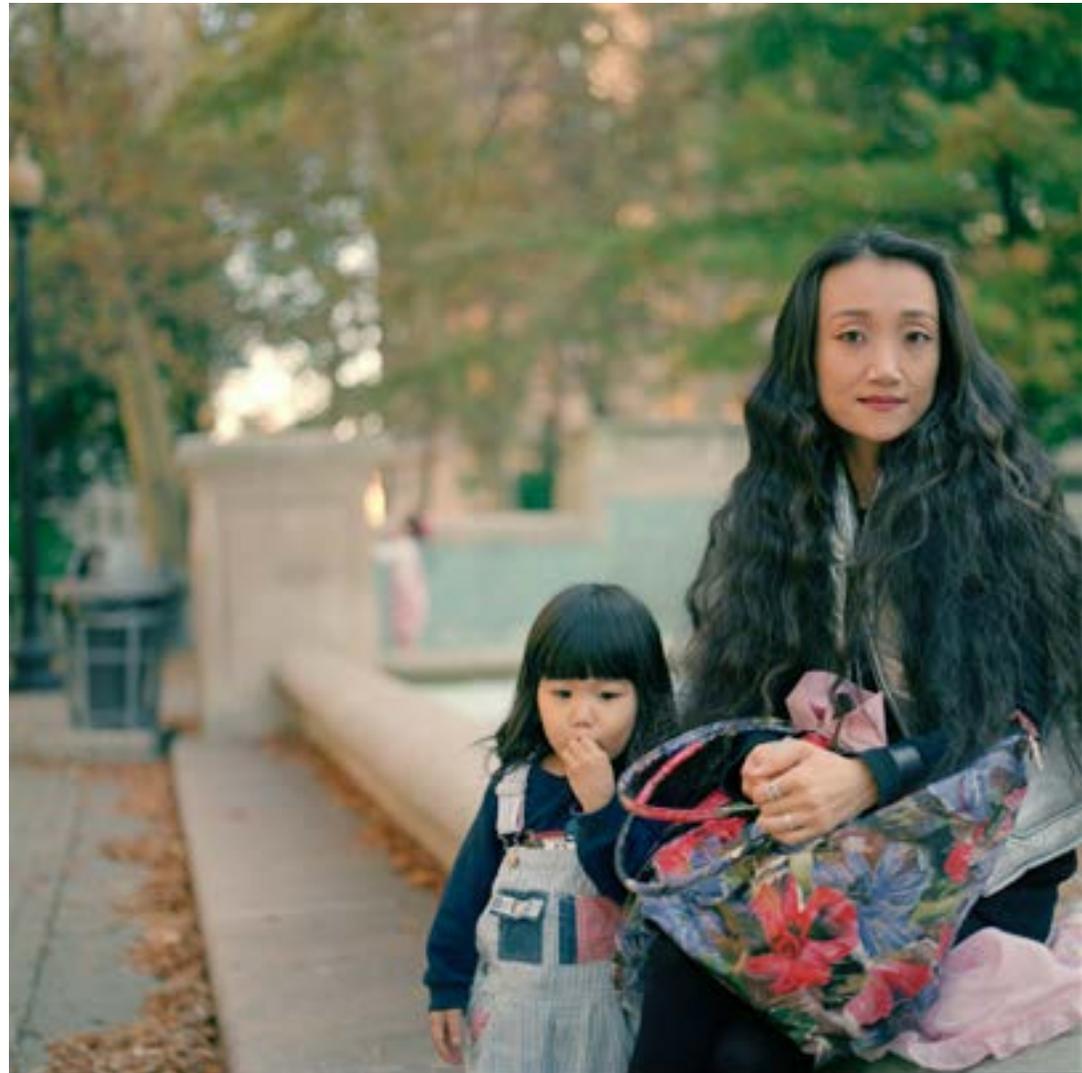
The square is a public space that serves as an outdoor living room for people from all walks of life. We are free to occupy its benches or lawns and contemplate life and our fellow citizens as they walk past.

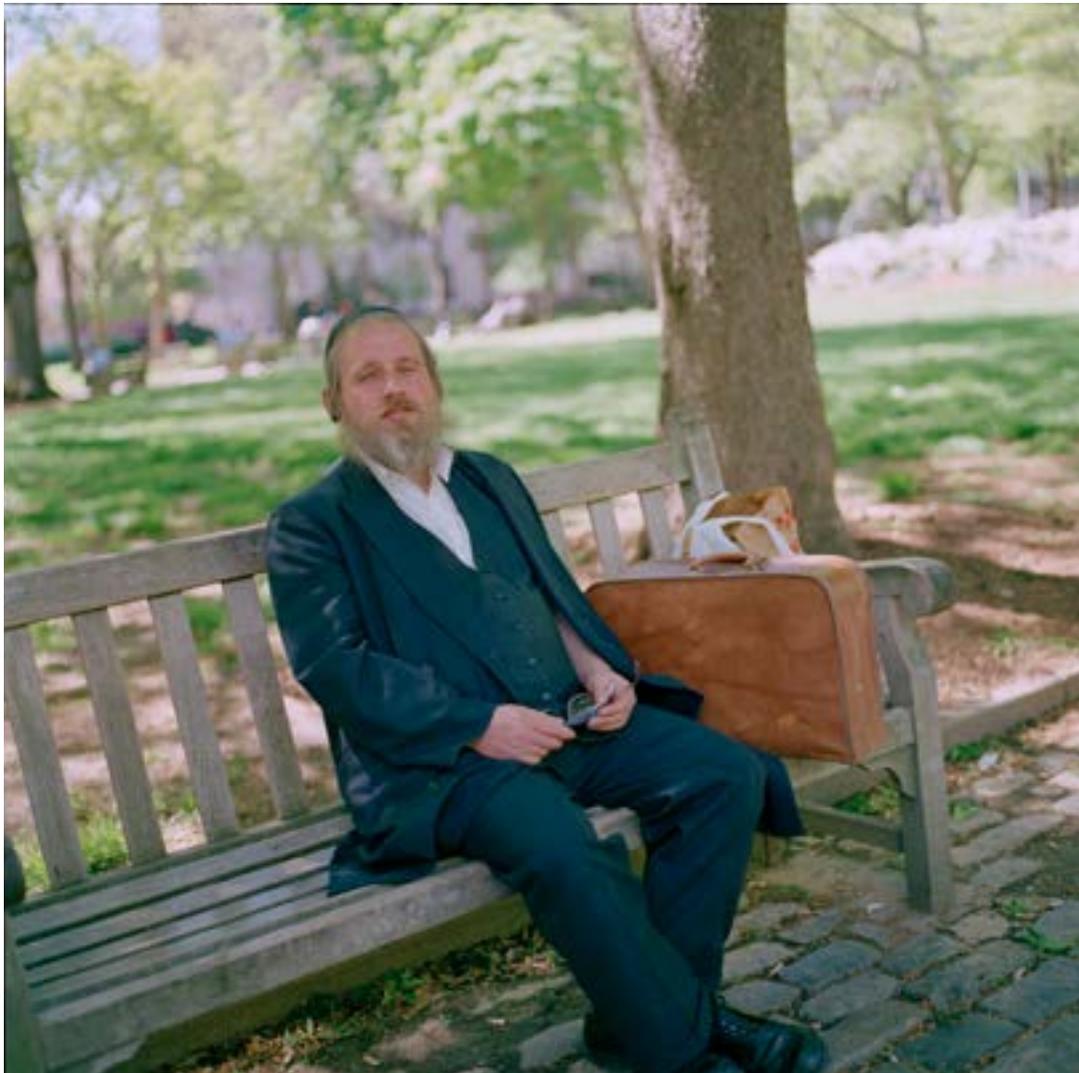
The photographs from my Rittenhouse Square series were commissioned for a show at the Philadelphia Art Alliance in May 1995 as part of a larger show entitled: *A Year in the Life of Rittenhouse Square*. Curated by Stephen Perloff.



Laurence Salzmänn
August 2013

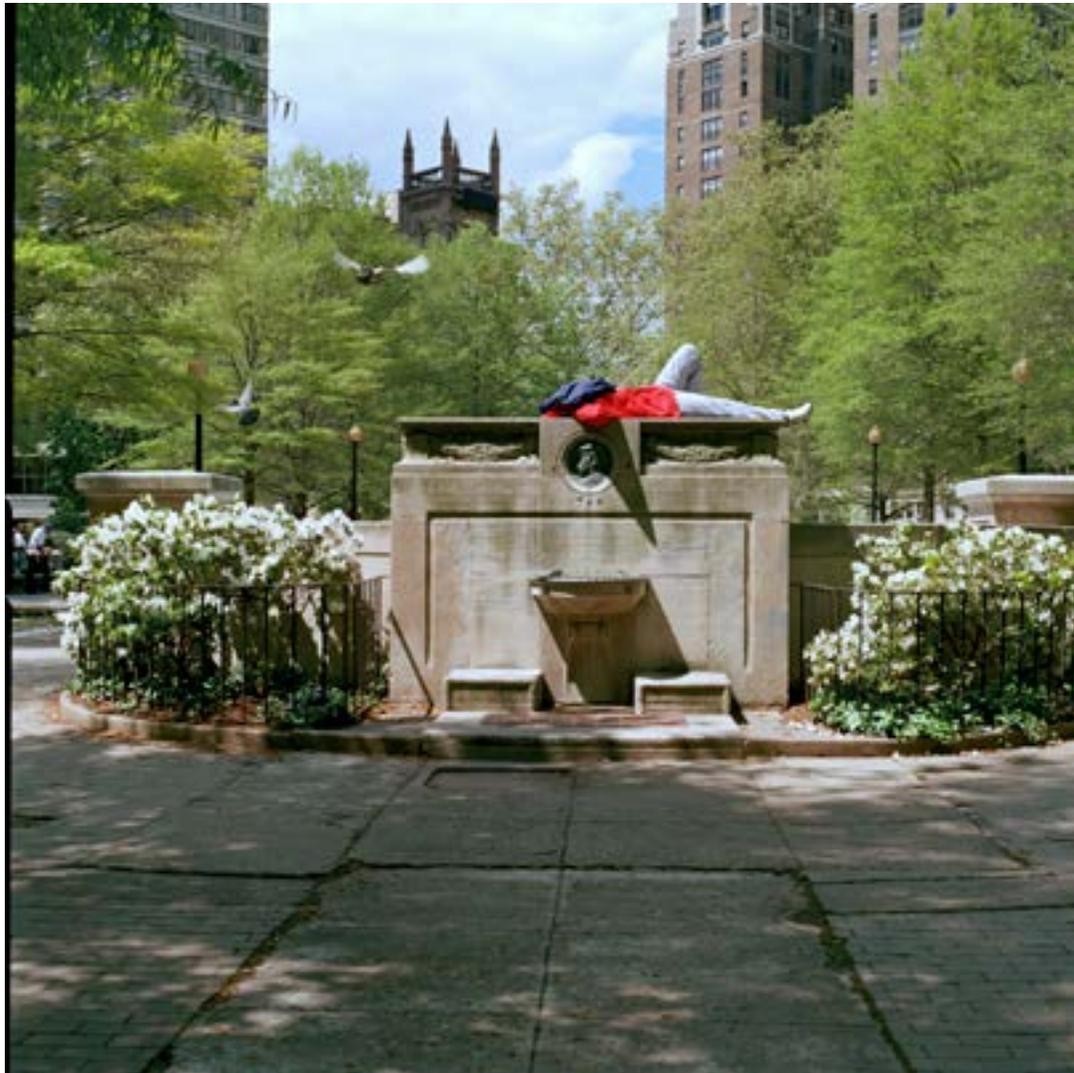










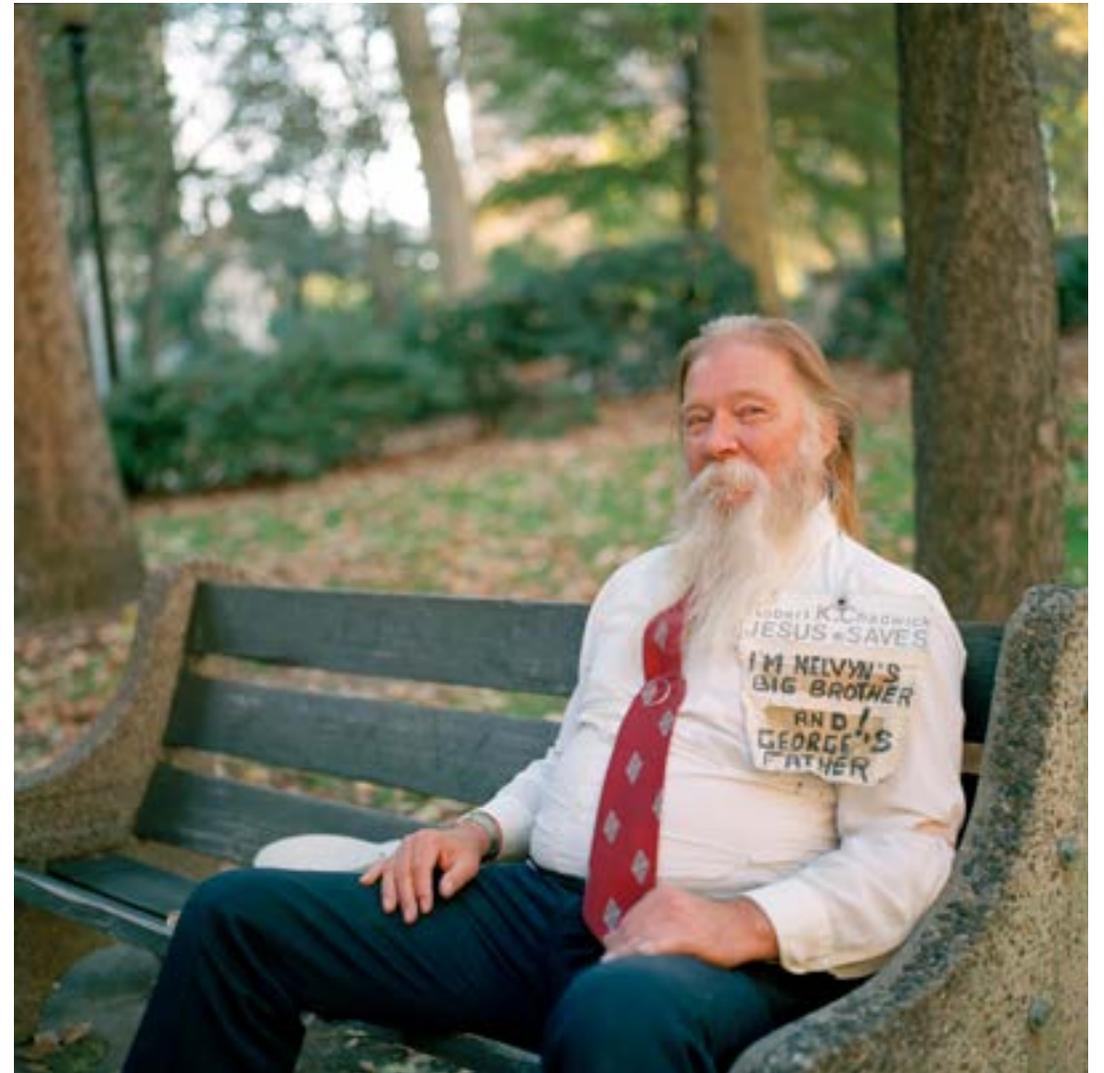


























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