

MONK WITH A **CAMERA**

THE LIFE AND JOURNEY OF NICHOLAS VREELAND

PRODUCED BY
VISHWANATH ALLURI
GUIDO SANTI
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DIRECTED BY
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LOGLINE

Like the Prince Siddhartha, Nicholas Vreeland walked away from a worldly life of privilege to pursue the Buddhist ideal. Once a promising photographer, he moved to India and became a Tibetan monk. Years later, he returns to photography to help his community of monks.

SYNOPSIS

This 90 minute feature documentary chronicles the life and spiritual quest of Nicholas (Nicky) Vreeland, who for the past twenty-eight years has been a Tibetan Buddhist monk. The son of a United States Ambassador, grandson of legendary Vogue editor Diana Vreeland, and a photographer by trade, Nicky left his privileged life behind to follow his true calling. He moved to India, cutting his ties with society, photography, and his pleasure-filled world, to live in a monastery with no running water or electricity. There he would spend the next 14 years studying to become a monk. Then in one of life's beautiful twists, Nicky went back to the worldly pursuit of photography in order to help his fellow monks rebuild their monastery, one of the most important of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. His journey from being a photographer to becoming a monk and, most recently, to being appointed as the abbot of the monastery he helped to rebuild, are the core of the story.

THE STORY

Like Prince Siddhartha, Nicholas (“Nicky”) Vreeland walked away from a worldly life of privilege to become a monk. The son of an American diplomat, Nicky grew up in Switzerland, Germany, France and Morocco before moving to the United States. He went to Groton, the prestigious prep school in Massachusetts, and by the time he finished his studies, it was clear to him he would be a photographer. Thanks to his grandmother, the legendary Vogue fashion editor Diana Vreeland, he got a job apprenticing world-renowned photographers Richard Avedon and Irving Penn; yet, Nicky felt something missing from his privileged and glamorous life. As he searched for meaning, Nicky was introduced to Khylongla Rinpoche, a Tibetan master and one of the spiritual teachers of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama. Rinpoche escaped Tibet in 1959 during the Chinese invasion, and eventually moved to New York in the early 60s to establish the Tibet Center for the study of Buddhism. Upon meeting Rinpoche at the Tibet Center, Nicky’s life would change dramatically. Rinpoche would become Nicky’s lifelong teacher and guru.

When Nicky's mother was diagnosed with terminal cancer, Nicky came to the realization that worldly pursuits were meaningless and felt the desire to become a monk. Ironically, his cameras were stolen, which made his decision easier. Without cameras to distract him, he completely immersed himself into the study of Buddhism. Rinpoche tried to hold Nicky back from becoming a monk, but, eventually, Nicky’s vocational calling was too strong to overcome. In 1984, he moved to India and he became a monk at the Rato Monastery -- the same monastery as his guru.

Before leaving for India, Nicky’s brother, Alexander, gave him a camera in hopes that Nicky would not give up photography completely. Nicky accepted the gift, but had no intention of using it. He was serious about his studies, and did not want to be distracted with photography at a time when he was trying to give up worldly attachments. He locked it away inside a trunk. It was only after many years of living there, Nicky would occasionally take the camera out to indulge his old passion.

Nicky would spend the next 14 years in India, earning a Geshe degree, the equivalent of a PhD in Buddhist philosophy and taking photos. During this time, more and more monks kept coming into India to join the Rato Monastery. Nicky’s monastic community grew from 8 to 150 monks, and soon there was not enough space to house them all. The time was urgent to help his fellow monks and Nicky took it upon himself to rebuild the monastery.

Some of his friends pledged for the funds, but when the stock market crashed in 2008, everything came to a sudden halt, and the people who pledged were not able to keep their pledges. It was difficult situation, which was made even more complicated by the facts that contracts had been signed and the work had to be completed within a certain amount of time. Nicky did not know what to do. Eventually, it was Nicky’s brother, Alexander, along with some of his friends, who suggested to Nicky to sell his photographs.

Together with Nicky, they were able to host and organize a series of exhibitions around the world to sell his photographs, which became PHOTOS FOR RATO. There was an event in Paris, Berlin, Rome, Naples, Genoa, New Delhi, Mumbai, and New York. The sales of his photographs raised over \$400,000 and the money was used to build a brand new monastery and dorms for the monks. Living conditions drastically improved for the Rato monks, and more importantly, the re-establishment of Rato in exile would forever ensure the preservation of Buddhist culture and identity.

In 2011, His Holiness the Dalai Lama officially inaugurated the Rato Monastery. It was attended by thousands of people who came to celebrate this history-making day. However, even after such a remarkable achievement, Nicky’s journey was far from over. Taking the Tibetan community by complete surprise, in April 2012, the Dalai Lama appointed Nicholas Vreeland as the Abbot of the new Rato Monastery, making him the first Westerner in over 2,800 years of Tibetan Buddhist history, to attain such a highly regarded position. This new development challenges Nicholas once more to forge a path where no monk has gone before, merging East and West, erasing cultural boundaries, bringing happiness and compassion to the world through his unique experience as a Westerner and his comprehensive understanding of the way of the Buddha.

STYLISTIC AND VISUAL APPROACH

MONK WITH A CAMERA is told prevalently through Nicky's point of view and narration. The documentary also features interviews with family and friends, including: His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, Khyongla Rinpoche, Richard Gere, John Avedon, Alexander Vreeland, Frederick "Frecky" Vreeland, Ptolemy Tompkins, Wendy Goodman and Tonne Goodman.

Aside from Nicky's photographs and archive footage, the documentary also features animation segments done in a deliberately simple, '70s TV-cartoon style, which illustrate Nicky's past adventures.

OUR IMPACT

MONK WITH A CAMERA is a film about a man who forges a very unique life for himself. A man, who is not afraid of committing to a spiritual path and that, in the process, finds a greater reason to pursue his work as an artist. This film is also about the deep bond between a teacher and his disciple, between East and West, and about finding a balance in a world of impermanence.

This is an original story that can appeal, not only to people interested in topical themes like religion and photography, but also to an audience who is passionate about stories of exceptional individuals who defy their times.

Nicky's story can help us to better understand ourselves, the time in which we live, the way we perceive monasticism and life in a Tibetan monastery in particular. It also gives us a historical perspective on Tibetan Buddhism from the point of view of a monk who is deeply engaged in preserving its message and tradition.

MONK WITH A CAMERA had its World Premiere at the 26th edition of The International Documentary Film Festival in Amsterdam (IDFA 2013) and it is currently playing at major festivals in the US. It will be theatrically released in US and North America in the Fall 2014.

THE PRODUCERS

VISHWANATH (VISH) ALLURI - PRODUCER / EXECUTIVE PRODUCER.

Vish is the Founder/Executive Chairman of IMImobile. Founded in 1999 and with its head quarters in London, IMImobile is a leading mobile data platform and services company serving over 90 mobile operators in 72 countries. Vish is a new comer into the world of film making thanks to his friendship with Nicholas Vreeland. In one of his visits to Rato Monastery, he accidentally met Tina and Guido as they were filming and got interested in their project. Vish is deeply touched by Jiddu Krishnamurti Teachings and he is closely involved with Krishnamurti Foundations worldwide in their archival work, publications and schools.

TINA MASCARA-PRODUCER / DIRECTOR / EDITOR. Tina was born in West Virginia. She studied journalism and photography at the Art Institute in Pittsburg, moved to Los Angeles to study cinema. After graduating from the Film program at the Los Angeles City College, Tina wrote, produced and directed two feature films: JACKLIGHT (2000) and ASPHALT STARS (2002). Both films have been shown and awarded at several domestic and international film festivals. In 2007, Tina co-founded Asphalt Stars Productions with Guido Santi and together they made their first feature documentary, CHRIS & DON: A LOVE STORY, on the life-long relationship between British writer Christopher Isherwood and American artist, Don Bachardy. The film was a critical success and was theatrically released by Zeitgeist Films in 2008.

GUIDO SANTI - PRODUCER / DIRECTOR / EDITOR. Guido was born in Italy. He started his career writing and directing short films. For four years he collaborated with *Ipotesi Cinema*, a film laboratory coordinated by Awards winning director Ermanno Olmi. He wrote and directed CONCERTINO, a story about four teenagers living in the suburbs of Rome, for RAI, Italy's national television. He moved to Los Angeles to study film at University of Southern California. After graduating, he began writing, producing and directing documentaries and TV specials. Among his most recent works, MANDALA: THE JOURNEY OF A DANCER (2002) and CHRIS & DON: A LOVE STORY (2008), which he co-directed, produced and edited with his partner, Tina Mascara.

DIRECTED AND EDITED BY
GUIDO SANTI AND TINA MASCARA

PRODUCED BY
**VISHWANATH ALLURI
GUIDO SANTI
TINA MASCARA**

CO-PRODUCER
LEONARDO COLLA

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS
**VISHWANATH ALLURI
ANDREW HERWITZ
LEONARDO COLLA
KENNETH GRIMES**

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY
UGO LO PINTO
RALPH Q. SMITH

MUSIC COMPOSED BY
PIVIO & ALDO DE SCALZI

ANIMATION
JOE ROTHENBERG

MOTION GRAPHICS
SLOANE KORACH

SOUND DESIGN & MIX
ANDY HAY, CAS

ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS
SIGNE JOHNSON
NANCY NETCHI
HUGH DOCHERTY

ADDITIONAL CINEMATOGRAPHY	PETER SALAPATAS GUIDO SANTI
SECOND UNIT CAMERA	KENNETH GRIMES LAURA SMITH ARTURO SINCLAIR CORY TOMASCOFF
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR	NADIA KIBOUT
PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS	ALICE WAGRET JULIA WEBER THEO TRECUL NICOLAS PIDOUX JEREMY PETETIN SARAH MALLET ANTHONY JAGET LOU FAULON JOAN BORDERIE ALEX CUNNINGHAM
POST-PRODUCTION SERVICES	IDES DIGITAL ARTS

COLORIST AND ON-LINE EDITOR JOEL IDES

HD SERVICES PROVIDED BY DIFFERENT BY DESIGN & HD CINEMA

POST PRODUCTION SOUND PROPER POST
SUPERVISING SOUND EDITOR ANDY HAY, CAS

DIALOG EDITOR JESSE POMEROY
SOUND EFFECTS EDITOR DAN KREMER
FOLEY BY SINC PRODUCTIONS
FOLEY MIXER LEOBARDO LEDON
FOLEY ARTIST DAVE DECOSTER
MIXED AT AIX STUDIOS

TITLE & WEB PAGE DESIGN SLOANE KORACH

MUSIC

ORIGINAL MUSIC BY PIVIO AND ALDO DE SCALZI
RECORDED AND MIXED AT TRANCENDENTAL STUDIO, GENOVA
PUBLISHED BY CREUZA, SRL

ALDO DE SCALZI PIANO, MARIMBA, VIBRAPHONE, GUITARS,
SYNTHESIZER
PIVIO PIANO, SANTUR, XILOPHONE, PERCUSSIONS,
SYNTHESIZER

WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF GNU QUARTET
I° VIOLIN ROBERTO IZZO
II° VIOLIN SYLVIA TRABUCCO
VIOLA RAFFAELE REBAUDENGO
CELLO STEFANO CABRERA

TIBETAN HORNS
COURTESY OF CRAIG MOLLINS
PHOTOS

PHOTOGRAPHS BY NICHOLAS VREELAND
PHOTOS FOR RATO
RETURN TO THE ROOF OF THE WORLD

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PRISCILLA RATTAZZI
DIANA VREELAND, "NEW YORKER" COVER
DIANA AND NICKY VREELAND IN JAPAN
NICKY VREELAND IN SOUTH AMERICA
COURTESY OF PRISCILLA RATTAZZI

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CECIL BEATON
DIANA VREELAND ON COUCH
COURTESY OF THE CECIL BEATON STUDIO ARCHIVE
AT SOTHEBY'S

PHOTOGRAPH BY DEBORAH TURBEVILLE
DIANA VREELAND'S SHOES
COURTESY OF THE STALEY-WISE GALLERY, NEW YORK

IRVING PENN CLOSE-UP WITH RAISED FINGER, NEW GUINEA, 1970
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PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICHARD AVEDON
DIANA VREELAND, DOVIMA, AND RICHARD AVEDON,
HAIR BY ENRICO CARUSO, NEW YORK STUDIO, JULY 1955
RICHARD AVEDON, PHOTOGRAPHER, PROVO, UTAH, AUGUST 20, 1980
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PHOTOGRAPH OF GROTON, COURTESY OF
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FILM EXCERPTS

“INTERVIEW WITH NICHOLAS VREELAND”
BY GRETA JENSEN
JUKES PRODUCTIONS LTD., 1985
COURTESY OF THE MERIDIAN TRUST
AND DOLMA BARES福德

“RETURN TO TIBET”
PRODUCED BY
SKIP BLUMBERG AND NICHOLAS VREELAND
COURTESY OF NICHOLAS VREELAND

SPECIAL THANKS

HIS HOLINESS
THE 14TH DALAI LAMA

KHYONLGA RATO RINPOCHE
THE MONKS OF RATO

GEORGE SAMUEL
TSETEN WANGCHUCK
ALEXANDER VREELAND
JOHN AVEDON
RICHARD GERE
WENDY GOODMAN
STACY GOODMAN
BEATRICE CARACCILO
ADAM BARTOS
DÉSIRÉE VON LA VALETTE
LEEZA MANGALDAS
PASSANG DOLMA
ANTONIO TIBALDI
UMBERTO COHEN
JAY TEITZEL
LISA CALLIF
BEBETTA CAMPETI

SURESH HARTI
PRADEED SACHDEVA
FREDERICK VREELAND
PTOLEMY TOMPKINS
PRISCILLA RATTAZZI
TONNE GOODMAN
NADIA TAZI
EMANUELA CATTANEO
AURORA LOPEZ
STEVE VARON
THAKCHO DOLMA
PHUNTSOK DOLMA
VINCENT NEMETH
BOB FOSTER
ARIANA TEITZEL
LINDA MCCLAIN
MARLENA GRZASLEWICZ

RICHARD DJOUADI
ECOLE DE LA CITE', PARIS

DARREN SMITH
THE TIBET CENTER-KUNKHYAB THARDO LING,
NEW YORK

KAAJJAL GUPTAA
THE INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY
INDIAN ART, MUMBAI

JAY AND ROSE DEUTSCH
THE LEICA GALLERY, NEW YORK

JUNKO SAKUNO
GRIFFIN EDITIONS, NEW YORK

MOLLIE RODRIGUEZ
THE GERE FOUNDATION

AUDE RAIMBAULT
FONDATION HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON, PARIS

KATHERINE MARSHALL
SOTHEBY'S, LONDON

EUGENIA BELL
THE RICHARD AVEDON FOUNDATION

DEE VITALE
THE IRVING PENN FOUNDATION

DEAN, DIANE GAYESKI
ITHACA COLLEGE

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WWW.PIVIOEALDODESCALZI.COM](http://www.pivioealdodescalzi.com)

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