

CAPTURE

Across Africa, people and wildlife have shared the same dramatic landscapes for generations. Award-winning photographer Piper Mackay offers her interpretation of the identity and lives of the residents of the continent through her camera lens, capturing extraordinary moments of both stillness and drama along the way

Piper Mackay

Originally California-based, Piper was profoundly moved the moment she set foot on African soil over 20 years ago. Since then, she has been recording her encounters with the people and animals that call the continent home, either in vivid colour or with her later, sophisticated monochromatic style. Piper has won multiple awards including Travel Photographer of the Year and also leads safaris to Africa.



Above: Many communities across Africa are celebrated for their traditions of body painting and decoration. Identity and beauty may be expressed through wild grasses, flowers and soil. Deep in Ethiopia's Omo Valley, Suri women adorn themselves with what they find growing around them. Piper elaborates, 'For me, it's never just about documenting what I see. It's about slowing down, building trust and recognising the incredible artistry woven into everyday life.'

Left: Piper captured this pride of lionesses on the open savannah plains of Kenya's Maasai Mara. 'There was a strange calm and something powerful about their presence, alert, unified and entirely in control of the space,' she says. 'It wasn't just the wildlife that felt rare. It was the silence, the space and the permission to be there long enough to create something this intimate.'

Below: 'It was hot, dry and dusty... I had been photographing from sunrise,' says Piper. She was in South Sudan, where thatched roofs are scattered across the wilderness. 'I loved the quiet simplicity of going home.... The rhythm of daily life unfolding just as it had for generations.'



Right: A woman from a remote Suri village stands in front of the lens. 'There was nothing accidental about this portrait,' recalls Piper. 'She stood with intention, eyes steady, posture strong. Every element, from the vivid crown of fresh flowers to the layered pigments on her face, reflected how she wanted to be seen.'





Opposite page: Zebras tentatively approach and drink from water during the night in Kenya, as Piper - unseen by the animals - clicks her shutter from a hide nearby. 'What struck me wasn't the moment itself, but the structure within it, the mirrored stripes, the symmetry, the quiet tension,' Piper explains. 'Sometimes, it's not the drama that makes the image. It's the stillness, the shape, and the patience to let it unfold.'

This page: A Karo elder sits in the soft evening light along the River Omo in the south of Ethiopia. He carries a title earned through age, experience and leadership. 'His expression was calm and focused, but there was a weight to it, as if he carried the memory of generations,' Piper says. 'I'll never forget the sense of dignity and presence he brought to the moment.'

 To see more of Piper's work, head to her Instagram @piper_mackay or website pipermackay.com where you can also find details of her safaris and expeditions.

