

Tango in San Francisco Statement

It almost felt that in the fall of 2001 as if the subject of Tango had chosen me. I was to photograph a wedding and I rode to the job in a car with the couple who'd made the cake. In the course of the two-hour drive they told me that they'd met tangoing. I felt immediately that this would be a good subject to photograph and they offered to introduce me to some dancers and some of the clubs in the Bay Area of California where milongas were held. A few days later, I was having dinner with a friend and she asked me what my next project would be. I told her that I was thinking about photographing tangeros. No sooner had I said that then the lights in the restaurant, Destino, were turned down, tango music began playing and a couple started dancing in a five-foot square patch of floor. I had never seen tango before. We had no idea that on Wednesday nights beginning at 9:00 this couple came to this restaurant and danced the tango. It felt like a sign that I was supposed to chronicle this dance. I did not resist. Three days later, I began my tour into a recreation of Argentinean tango culture such as exists in many cities and towns all over America.

For \$10.00 a night, a person can go to a club and find a passion dancing the tango that she may find nowhere else in life. It takes years to learn to dance properly, three years at least. It's not just the steps that are difficult, it's knowing them so well that she can anticipate her partners direction so that when he leads, she can move with him. He is usually a stranger to her – that is the dare, the fun, to be able to move with someone fluidly as if she's always known him. A woman is chosen by a man (or another woman) to dance. She often begins a set of three dances feeling skeptical of her partner, if not outright loathing towards him, but ends feeling deeply about him. That's what happens when people move well together and the better a dancer the more partners suit her. The romantic longing between the tangoing partners can be the meaning in a person's life. I hope that's what the pictures begin to get at.