



NIGHTS IN THE SQUARE
Kessell shot all of the *True Believers* series with a Nikon D750 and switched between Nikon 28mm f/1.8 and 35mm f/2 lenses.

"People were looking up and hoping to have their picture taken, so what they were really worshipping was themselves," the photographer says.

Perhaps due to his background in psychology, Kessell had happened upon an interesting and relevant conversation about narcissism and the human interaction with technology.

Intrigued by this idea, the photographer returned to Times Square with camera in hand more than 20 times, searching for people gazing up in that same intense way.

From this exploration, his series *True Believers* was born. His images show subjects spanning age, race, and gender, a variation that makes the work all the more powerful.

Kessell notes that finding people naturally taking on that pose was no easy feat, as many of those he saw were talking, smiling, or laughing rather than having quiet moments of observation.

"I kept getting ready to quit," Kessell says of many failed trips. "I had a hard time finding people who had a certain look. A look like they are in the middle of

prayer or ecstasy."

While the subject matter proved difficult, Kessell was able to curate a series of photographs with a cohesive theme. Out of context, the subjects in his images look as though they are mid-prayer, engulfed by something completely consuming.

Asked how he goes about getting permission to take the portraits, Kessell responds, "I don't ask for permission. People are so enthralled with looking at themselves they don't ever notice me." —**Sara Cravatts**