

CHANINTR LIVING

Holiday 2021



RODNEY SMITH: THROUGH HIS LOOKING GLASS

Extraordinary moments happen on ordinary days.
Let's set the stage for the extraordinary to happen every day.



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Rodney Smith is our gold standard, our idol and our counsel.

When we get into a disagreement or can't decide on what tableware to buy or which towel would be good, we always end up asking ourselves the one question that ends it: What would Roddy do? Would Roddy buy this? The answer is usually crystal clear.

Roddy is with us every day ... In our home, he is the first thing we see when we walk out of the bedroom, with us as we walk down the stairs and greeting us when we get back from a long day. At the office, our desks and shelves are filled with his images as they grace the covers of our journals and fill the walls of our showrooms. When we are home on Sundays, even though we live in Thailand, we stream WQXR, Roddy's favorite channel, and all of a sudden, we have a direct link and taste the serene world that Rodney cherished.

We can't help talking about Roddy ... Many meals with people we are getting acquainted with (not the regular ones as they have heard it all too many times) usually has a story or two about Roddy mixed in. Whether it is the perfectly framed plumbing instructions in his home, the precisely aligned copper pipes each with a brass identifier, the room full of black paint in case the manufacturer goes under, the underfloor heating of the mahogany-paneled garage, or how he had the windshield wipers of his first car, a Porsche 911, removed because he disliked the wiper marks that each car normally has. Roddy's stories make for great dinner conversation.

Roddy is the one person that we love to please ... For some reason, everyone just wanted to see Roddy happy. His approval of what we do, made us feel good. It may have been because he was such a perfectionist but probably it was more because of his honesty and innocence that was almost childlike. We would go all out to make him happy. On his first trip to Bangkok, for a show we did for him, an unusual sense of joy and relief took us when Patricia and Laura told us that (whether or not they were exaggerating or being serious) "Oh, you are so lucky because Rodney loved the Sukhothai Hotel so much and didn't complain at all." They explained further that they once did a shoot in Santa Barbara and Roddy changed rooms 14 times.

We had better stop now as I could just hear Roddy saying his all too familiar "Oh stop guys, you are embarrassing me ..."

Rodney Smith, you will be thoroughly missed but never, ever, forgotten.

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COVER
POLAROID SELF-PORTRAIT, SCHOENBRUNN PALACE
VIENNA, AUSTRIA
BY RODNEY SMITH

PHOTOGRAPHY
BY RODNEY SMITH

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50,000 Trees

Through Plant for the Planet, CHANINTR has achieved our company goal of planting one tree for every item we sell.

During the planting season of 2021, we planted 50,000 trees in Mae Hong Sorn, which will offset up to 1,130,226 kilograms of carbon dioxide per year.

To learn more and track our progress, visit bit.ly/chanintrtreecounter



SOMEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOW

Originally published on THE END, April 2, 2014

I live in a very small, somewhat Bohemian community on the Hudson River about ten miles from Manhattan. We are so close to the city that if this was LA I would be living downtown amidst cement and shopping centers, but luckily it's not and the metropolis of New York ends at the George Washington Bridge separating New York from the foreign land of New Jersey.

It is an 18th century community nestled into the Palisades (cliffs that lie near the river), with a great deal of history.

Although closely attached to the extremities of New York City, it is far far away with few unpaved roads, and a mixture of homes from the 18th century to the ultra modern. No two homes are the same in appearance or even scale. There are large estates, and tiny cottages all intertwined into the community called Sneden's Landing.

It dates back to the American Revolution, where George Washington had his headquarters a few miles from the landing and it became one of the main traverses of Washington as he traveled with his troops to cross the Hudson River. In fact the main lane is called Washington Spring Road as legend has it that he often stopped at the small spring to get water for himself and his troops.

At the foot of the Palisades lies the original Molly Sneden house, which used to provide Ferry Service across the great expanse of the Hudson River to the alternate side of Dobbs Ferry. Legend states that there existed a great love affair between Molly Sneden and William Dobbs.

For a time in the 19th Century at the foot of the landing Hudson River sloops were built at the edge of the river, and grand Hudson River estates were built to escape the noise and heat of Manhattan in the Summer.

Beautiful gardens were built and some truly majestic trees were planted that still existed until recently, and like the homes of England each house in the landing has a name. There is the Ding Dong House, The Laundry, Cliffside, The Captains Lair, etc. and often houses have passed on to descendants or people move from one house to another as their lives change.

Throughout its history Sneden's Landing has always been home to the eccentric and the artistic. In the '20s it was filled with writers and publishers, and today it is filled with movie stars, dancers, directors, theatrical lawyers, and some businessmen, and me.

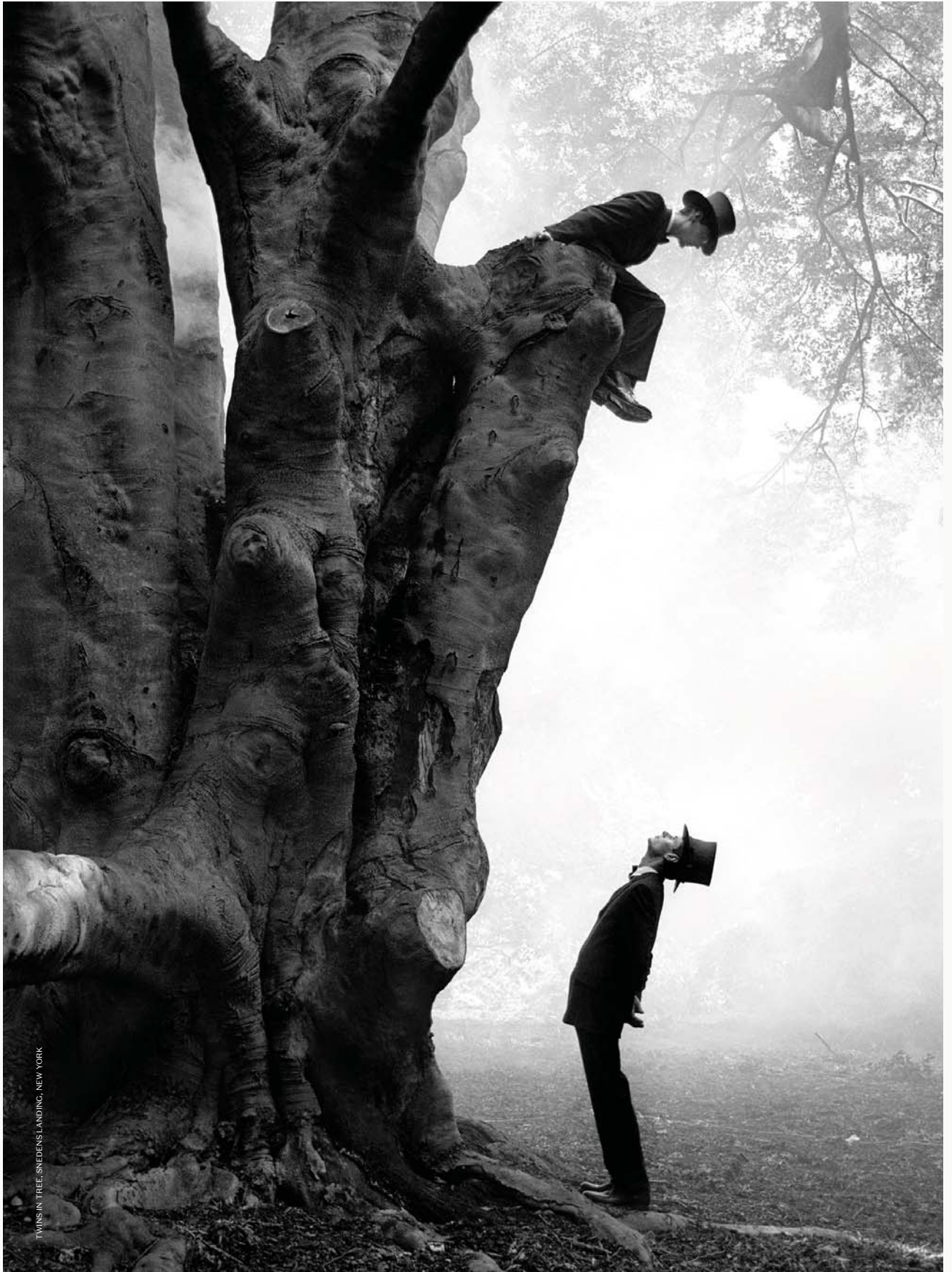
Sneden's prides itself in its slightly organic quality. Things ramble a bit, houses decay, stone walls are left to their own devices, and things in general are left to fall where they may. This is part of a carefully orchestrated aesthetic, that was original to the original landing but today is something only money can buy.

Although my house is very old (1840) it is very meticulously restored and it is a place of order and solace. When you turn down Washington Spring Road into Sneden's Landing that is far away from traditional American suburbia. It is a small remnant of nonchalant country life, but when you finally enter the large black gates, the entrance to our home you have left the laissez-faire behind. My hedges are neatly clipped. My lawn, which at the moment is being vacuumed to pick up winter's debris, is usually carefully clipped and manicured. My driveway is raked like a Japanese monastery, and I agonize over the quality of paint (buying fifty gallons of the last oil based paint available). Unlike the slow decay around me I am continually in odds with Mother Nature, defying its continual effort to dull my paint, give my grass heartache and my stones a truly unkempt look. I never win this battle but as long as I'm breathing I will try to stand strong.

Like my photographs all is in its place, serene, peaceful and balanced. I would think that when you enter the property you have entered the world of Rodney Smith.

I hope it is as inviting as what lies before, for like the original Sneden's Landing, I would hope that I am one of a kind.

— Rodney Smith



TWINS IN TREE, SNEDENS LANDING, NEW YORK



SELF-PORTRAIT WITH LESLIE, SIENNA, ITALY, 1990



MY DEAR RODDY

I met Rodney Smith in 1987. The timing was serendipitous. I was a 35-year-old designer and Rodney was a 40-year-old photographer. I instantly fell in love with his talent (falling in love with the man would come shortly afterwards). His pictures were remarkable and unlike any other photographer I'd ever worked with. The photographs excited me, and inspired me, and they still do.

But Rodney was even more unique than his photographs. He had a vision of how life should be lived and what the world should look like. He made sure that those around him knew it too. Whether you were his wife, his children and family, his photo team, his housekeepers and gardeners, his friends, his students, his clients, his gallery owners, his publishers, his contractors, his neighbors, his doctors or his local coffee shop, you knew that his expectations would make you aim higher. He had a quest to make the world more beautiful, more precise, more peaceful, more romantic, more witty, more human, more interesting — more lasting. This extended to every detail of his life, where he insisted on maintaining the most exacting of standards. From my description you might think he was only concerned with the surface — how things looked and were made, but it was just the opposite.

Rodney was intensely looking for connection, to make sure you understood him, and vice versa. He was always searching for the truth, for something worth talking about. He wasn't interested in a litany of facts and figures, or what the celebrities were doing this week. He wanted to dig down to find the essence of you. He'd ask you about your day and about your routines. How did you feel about that? He wanted to know what made you tick. The glue, the sticky part of Rodney, was his inherent understanding of the uniqueness of each person.

With me it was the same. He'd remind me who I am deep inside and encourage me to build on that. Calmly, and with generosity, he'd say it isn't easy to change, to achieve greatness, "to thine own self be true." He'd tell me there would always be obstacles along the way that seem insurmountable, but if I follow my heart I will find the way.

Rodney may be physically gone but he is here with me every day. He continues to inspire me, and excite me, and teach me about the world — as he does with all of us who were lucky enough to know him. And for all of those who are just discovering him for the first time, I'm thrilled for them to see the world through his eyes.

— Leslie Smolan



MELISEY BALANCING ON TIGHTROPE, AMENIA, NEW YORK

HOW I MET RODNEY

A visionary who was devoted to his art, Rodney Smith was an artist of the highest order. His friends often describe him as particular, meticulous and detailed. Simply put, an embodiment of “living well.”

But he was also caring and had a great sense of humor. Following are some first impressions of Smith's, and how the perceptions evolved over time.

“I had been asked to produce a commercial campaign in South America with a “famous photographer” named Rodney Smith. The executive producer told me I first needed to go up to Rodney's house to meet him and essentially get approved for the job. I had never heard of Rodney Smith and didn't know anything about him. These weren't the days of Googling everyone and everything so I truly went up to Rodney's house not knowing anything about him or his work. Based on a few assumptions that I inaccurately made, and the fact that his executive producer was a guy who I associated with hip hop culture, I had assumed Rodney was a young hipster. Clearly, upon arriving at his house which was a beautiful estate, and meeting Rodney with his monogrammed Brooks Brothers shirt and tie, he was clearly not what I expected. He looked more like a CEO of a bank. My impression changed over time and I found Rodney to be playful, fun, funny, serious but he could also laugh at things and be lighthearted.”

— Alec Sash, Producer

“I met Rodney in 1974 as a college teacher of mine. At that time, I felt that he was very serious, intense and committed to his craft. In later years, his sense of humor came forward, but his commitment to creating photographs as works of art continued unceasingly.”

— Terence Falk, Rodney Smith's Former Assistant

“Rodney wasn't a small talker. He got right into the hard questions and wanted to know the intimate details of your life. It was very startling the first time I met him. But after getting to know him, I realized it was how he showed he cared about you as a person and wasn't concerned with the trivialness of small talk. He wanted to know you and cared about you as a person.”

— Patricia Barrett, Rodney Smith's Assistant and Master Printer

“When Jill told me that she wanted to introduce us at his house, I was intimidated at first. He was very well dressed, and, like so many other designers, I admired his work so much. He loved our company and made us feel so welcome. He was very down-to-earth and excited that I loved the same things he did. We had this immediate friendship with one another because we respected and appreciated one another's work.”

— Suzanne Kasler, Interior Designer

“Always in a hurry, curious about other people, selective and precise, very funny. Pretty accurate.”

— Sabine Feuilletoy, Fashion Stylist

“My first impression was over the phone when I had inquired about representing his work in Sun Valley. He was warm, thoughtful and thorough. He was not willing to commit to anything until we met in person, which we did. He was all of those things in person as I experienced and the phone. That initial impression stayed true over all the years I knew him.”

— L'Anne Gilman, Director of Gilman Contemporary

THE ENIGMATIC OPTIMIST

FOR RODNEY,
A CLEAR MIND
DEPENDS UPON AN
ORDERLY DRIVEWAY,
AND NO PRICE TAG
IS TOO BIG IF IT LEADS
TO A GOOD IDEA.

Until I met Roddy, I had no idea how important it is to have a friend who can wear an ascot — it's a sure sign of independence and fearlessness.

One time, I asked Roddy, "What goes through your mind just before depressing the shutter?" He replied, "It's interesting you should use the word depressing." So, I asked him if he was happy or not. He said, "I'm a closet optimist." I encouraged him to come out of the closet and lead an openly optimistic lifestyle. But I believe that if he had — if he could have — he would have lost an essential part of his artistic identity. I think artists tend to be driven by a desire to correct what they think is wrong with the world — to make it perfect. For instance, the first time I visited Rodney's house in Snedens Landing, there were two workers raking the gravel in his driveway. When I went to see him a couple of months later, they were still there, raking. I said, "Rodney, how big is your raking budget?" I think for Rodney, a clear mind depended upon an orderly driveway, and no price tag is too big if it leads to a good idea.

Whenever Rodney and I got together, our conversation would inevitably turn to a discussion regarding the degree to which we felt underappreciated — not by friends or family, but by the rest of the world: especially the commercial world. Being underappreciated, being misunderstood, is a subject we never tired of. In fact, we believed it to be a subject worthy of being taught at the university

level, and that the dean of the department should be Rodney Smith. Rodney understood that the only cure for feeling underappreciated is complaining about it — especially to someone who suffers from the same condition. I believe that is why Roddy admired Freud so much. One time he told me that “Freudian psychoanalysis is the greatest gift that was ever given to me — much more important than money or anything else.” (I’m sure he wasn’t including his wife or his children when he said that.) He continued, saying, “I think that without 25 years of therapy I never would have been a successful photographer.” I know how expensive Roddy’s photographs are, and I also know how costly therapy is, so I always wondered if his earnings as a photographer were neutralized by the price of being a patient. When I asked him, he assured me that he was well ahead of the game, so I no longer worried about all that raking.

But before there was Freud there was God — at least that’s what some people say — so Rodney attended divinity school in order to explore the Big Questions: What is the nature of humankind? Why are we here? What does it all mean? And most of all: Why don’t these questions have answers? It’s like we’re stuck in some kind of darkness. For Rodney, the light he chose for illuminating that darkness was humor. Rodney’s work is often described as whimsical, or surreal, but his photographs portray the human condition as powerfully as those taken by his mentor Walker Evans.

At the end of the day, the only thing that separates the artistic visions of these two men is wardrobe. Don’t be distracted by the women in ball gowns. Don’t be misled by the men in tuxedos. An exquisitely manicured garden can still be a labyrinth without an escape. Sometimes the only line of defense between insanity and the absurdity of life is a ledge. When you look at Roddy’s businessman — who for all eternity is poised to leap off a building — miraculously, you don’t fear for him. It’s a Charlie Chaplin moment. And we know that somehow, he’s going to land where it’s soft.

And all those people in Rodney’s photographs who search the horizons with binoculars or telescopes or even magnifying glasses, looking for something that may never come, or the ones who put their head in a hedge, or a fireplace, or a jet engine — what is Rodney saying if not, this is who we are — this is the our plight, and all we can do, to endure it, to survive it, to try to understand it, is to embrace it. To put on our best clothes, put on our best face — to don our ascots — and enjoy it for as long as it lasts. And if that’s closet optimism, I’ll take it.

— Walter Thomas



PEARS CLINTON, CONNECTICUT 1973

Originally published on THE END, March 1, 2010

AND YOU, MY FATHER, THERE ON
THE SAD HEIGHT, CURSE, BLESS,
ME NOW WITH YOUR FIERCE TEARS,
I PRAY DO NOT GO GENTLE INTO
THAT GOOD NIGHT RAGE,
RAGE AGAINST THE DYING OF
THE LIGHT.

— Dylan Thomas

I am fearful of elevators, loneliness and the evening. It's not the deep dark weightlessness of late night that perturbs and frightens me, it's the transition from light (to be able to see) to darkness that troubles and unsettles me. It is within these hours where I become anxious and filled with despair.

This must be one of the reasons I am a photographer. I go out into the world, to breathe its notoriety and humor, to be able to see clearer, to look for understanding and purpose, to open up and reach exuberantly and unforgivingly for the light.

But as the sun sets, and darkness begins to overwhelm the struggle, my life becomes unsettled.

This is in my pictures. It is my desperate attempt to stamp the world with good humor and grace. It is my attempt to fight fiercely, with "ruthless determination" against banality. To feel the world, to find its purpose, to understand its laws, to expose its beauty and grace, for me, lies within the hours of the day. As I work within the conflicts of the rebellious and uncontrollable light of day, I wait for the repercussions of the night, like a naughty child who waits for his father to return home in the evening.

— Rodney Smith



PEARS, CLINTON, CONNECTICUT





KINDRED SPIRIT

The moment I met Rodney Smith I knew we were kindred spirits. I think it happened when he revealed the interior of his garage at his beautiful home in the Palisades, New York. I recall gasping out loud when I saw it: a garage completely lined in mahogany beadboard, stained and varnished like a yacht. I swooned ... not just at what I was seeing but what I suddenly knew about this man ... that for him, life was in the details, the exquisite ones.

His wife Leslie later said: "You and Roddy are so alike." Who knows what she really meant by that but I think what she meant is that we both were/are tortured by our quest for perfection and by our constant pursuit of beauty.

We all respond to the world around us. Every encounter, every place we enter, everything we see affects us. We respond positively to kindness, to patience and to elegance. We are hurt by rudeness and vulgarity. As a HSP (Highly Sensitive Person), I know one when I see one and Rodney was a Super HSP. He kept somewhat apart from the world because most of the world was too harsh for him. In fact I think this was the driving force behind his work. Rodney needed to create a world of beauty that he could inhabit with beautiful people in beautiful situations. And he did this painstakingly well. He also did it lovingly and longingly and with humor and with irony.

When creating imagery for my own brand I knew he was my man. I wanted so much to create a vision for elegant living, open ended where dreams to be dreamt and hopefully realized. I wanted nature as the backdrop and I couldn't think of anyone more perfectly suited for this task than Rodney. And so we set out to capture these ideals on five different, magical occasions.

I wanted to deliver my message through the avatar of a woman and Roddy knew just the woman, the lovely model Zoe.

Working with Rodney was seamless and elegant. The whole process from the sought out locations to the exquisitely catered food to the selected vintage wardrobes and to the energetic people who made up his devoted team. Everyone on set brought a heightened sense of the magical and ephemeral quality of the moment.

Rodney worked with a traditional format 4x5 Hasselblad camera ... you know the old fashioned camera, one that stands on a big tripod. The one you need to duck under a big black cloth to see through the viewfinder.

Have you ever seen through one of those viewfinders? Guess what? You see the image upside down. That blew my mind ... that he could compose such elegance upside down.

With all moving parts on a shoot from the tide coming in, to the wind kicking up, to the balancing act of a stack of plates or teacups ... Rodney, like the eye of the storm, was the center of stillness.

While he might nudge or prod, he let the professionals do what they did, and then, like a true director, he would all of a sudden shout "Stop!"

And with a WHOOSH! he would duck under that big black cloth. The dust and the dirt, the rain and the wind, along with all of us would hold our breath and remain suspended while he captured the moment. Nobody knows how many takes it takes to get the ONE perfect image.

I had magical times with Rodney and with his team. He became a treasured friend, one with whom I could be myself, my crazy nitpicky self because I was speaking to a complete aesthete.

Introducing Roddy to Chanintr, two of my favorite people whom I knew would also be instant kindred spirits has given me so much joy because through Chanintr Living, Roddy's work is very much alive and well.

The singer Freddie Mercury once said: "We are the misfits who are singing to all the misfits at the back of the room." That saying really resonated with me. It made me realize that if you listen to yourself, and if you strive to bring forth what is in your mind's eye, with no guarantee if it will resonate with others, then what you are doing is taking the risk of being authentic.

Rodney Smith took the risk to be himself ... and we are the lucky recipients of his unique and spellbinding vision of beauty.

Thank you Rodney.

— Barbara Barry



JAMES IN INNERTUBE WITH DUCK, LAKE PLACID, NEW YORK

A WALK DOWN MEMORY LANE

To those that didn't know him personally, Rodney Smith was an acclaimed photographer who captured striking images.

To those who were closely acquainted with him, Smith was kind, passionate and full of life.

Read what his friends describe as their favorite memories of him.

"My favorite memory of Rodney was driving around Buenos Aires in a van scouting locations for an upcoming Visa commercial. Rodney was hired by a Latin advertising agency to deliver this epic, cinematic commercial except they hired the wrong person. They wanted new, slick and modern and Rodney's work was timeless, classic and artful. Rodney and the agency could not have disagreed more about the creative approach and at this point during a contentious and tumultuous prep we were driving around this amazing city, Rodney and the film crew in one van and the agency in another. We spent the day laughing uncontrollably at the agency creatives and some of the hilarious things they said that when we would stop to see a location, we would all pile out of the van still cracking up. The guys would look at us, they knew we were laughing at them and were so annoyed but we just couldn't stop ourselves. This set the tone for the entire project. Eventually, Rodney and the agency guys stopped speaking and I had to be the go-between for every conversation and every note. The takeaway line which made us cry in laughter every time we repeated it was 'Rodney, I do not share your vision.'"

— Alec Sash, Producer

"We were shooting a campaign for the New York City Ballet, and we managed to use the attic space high up inside the tower of the Chrysler Building in Manhattan, one of the most iconic symbols of the city.

We were experiencing a place few people knew about or had ever seen. The incredible vaulted Art Deco ceilings and triangular windows all reaching for the sky, the wonderful light pouring in and the grace and elegance of the dancers all came together to create an unforgettable moment.

Roddy was in sync with all these elements and created incredibly beautiful images."

— Terence Falk, Rodney Smith's Former Assistant

"I moved to New York City as a budding photographer. I would commute out to Snedens Landing when I worked for Roddy. One day while I was at work my apartment got robbed and unfortunately, all my cameras and camera equipment got stolen. It was a devastating blow to me as I was still struggling to make ends meet. A couple of weeks later, Roddy called me into the garden room and presented me with a brand new Hasselblad camera. It was the most generous thing anyone had ever done for me. I will never forget that incredibly kind and thoughtful moment."

— Patricia Barrett, Rodney Smith's Assistant and Master Printer

"My favorite memory and interaction with Rodney will always be when I was introduced to him by Jill Cohen. Rodney and I had hired Jill as our book agent. She knew that I had a love and appreciation for fashion, photography as well as the home and garden. She introduced us at his house when I was visiting her in New York. It was such a special home, filled with so many wonderful things he could not wait to tell us about. He was so excited to share his world with people who appreciated his amazing work."

— Suzanne Kasler, Interior Designer

"I remember a project in Argentina (Alec was our producer), where Rodney and the creative team weren't on the same wavelength. It created very comical and difficult situations. I loved how Rodney steadily fought to hold his vision."

— Sabine Feuilletoy, Fashion Stylist

"One of my favorite memories was a weekend I spent at his home reviewing his book layout prior to publication. He took me to lunch at his favorite local Greek restaurant where we talked about life, family and the art world. It was one of the few times we had to just sit and share life stories and I will never forget it."

— L'Anne Gilman, Director of Gilman Contemporary

“LET ME
TELL YOU
ABOUT
RODDY SMITH”

HE LEFT LITTLE TO CHANCE
AND METICULOUSLY
CREATED IMAGES OF BEAUTY.
HIS PROCESS WAS
DELIBERATE, MINDFUL,
DETAILED AND VERY
DEMANDING



As a photographer, he is on the “A” list. He was a genuine artist with a classical bent and an open disdain for trendy art full of celebrity and spectacle.

There are two types of photographers, those who take photographs and those who make photographs. Roddy was a foremost practitioner of the latter. He left little to chance and meticulously created images of beauty. His process was deliberate, mindful, detailed and very demanding. But what he captured in the click of a shutter was pure aesthetic grace often accented with wit and humor. The depth of his black and white images defy the limitations of monochrome. His use of color was never gratuitous and always sophisticated.

I can remember the first “Roddy” photo my wife and I purchased. It was a 4x5 landscape of the Welsh countryside. In the black and white image, an expansive hillside is crowned by a row of trees

against a gray sky. As I looked at the picture, I noticed a few white specs near the trees. At first, I thought it might be an accidental flaw in the print. However, after examination with a magnifying glass, I was astonished that the details in question were a few grazing sheep in crisp detail!

As a dear friend and neighbor, the times were good, and the laughs, hearty. He was a master of the outdoor grill and knew how to flip a fine burger. My wife Janet always enjoyed conversing with him about his beautiful garden, home maintenance techniques, and the local gossip. To this day, we’ll often use a “Roddyism” to stress a point when we need a chuckle.

— Ken Carbone & Janet Coombs





SAORION SEA PLANE WING, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



SUI GENERIS

You can get a good sense of an artist from the world they create in their artworks. In Rodney's case, that world is naturally elegant, gentle, gracious, witty, with nary an imperfection in sight. This is also reflected in the home he made with his wife, Leslie, the renovations of which were documented in a Wall Street Journal article. His images provided a vital escape from the real world, for himself as well as for us.

Make no mistake, creating the world of Rodney Smith was not easy — after all, the pursuit of perfection in an imperfect reality was bound to be an anxious endeavour; futile and frustrating. However the camera enabled him to both attain intimacy and project strength. He traversed the world photographing the rich and famous, the power brokers and corporate titans. But what I treasured about Rodney was not reflected in his photographs. To me, his most endearing and enduring trait was his kindness to those whom he felt were not the most powerful amongst us. It was indeed a privilege to have glimpsed these moments, because it was as if the world of Rodney Smith did truly exist in our world.

I found myself looking at his images and rereading his famous blog “The End Starts Here” over the last one and a half years. I had longed for something authentic, quirky, from a different time. They provided much needed comfort. On the one hand, I wished he were still writing and photographing, providing wisdom and distraction. On the other, I felt immense relief and, if I am being honest, slight envy, that he did not have to experience the despair and desperation of the pandemic.

I have yet to meet anyone like Rodney Smith. I suspect I never might. They just don't make 'em like they used to.

We miss you very much Roddy.

— Stephanie Fong

STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN

Originally published on THE END, March 1, 2010

As the world dances foolishly into Styrofoam, sheetrock, laminates, plastic and more plastic, and lastly but far from leastly into the high-tech world of titanium to sell you the latest technological gadgetry, I remain firmly and devoutly rooted in the ancient love and lore of wood. I love the smell of fresh cut wood, the peculiarities of each of its species and mostly the framing and shaping of its vast variety into a special enclosure called a home. I also love wood furniture. As it slowly ages it only gets more majestic, with a deeper patina, exposing its history with pride and grace. What piece of plastic ages so beautifully?

Besides loving the deep bowels of a home referred to as its basement, throughout my photographic career, I have been attracted to garrets. I am not referring to a modern day attic in houses built since the 1950's. I am referring to a majestic home, manor house, cathedral or ancient structure, where hidden in the upper floors among the thick wooden trusses, that criss-cross to shape and hold the basic structure is on occasion a truly holy and private place.

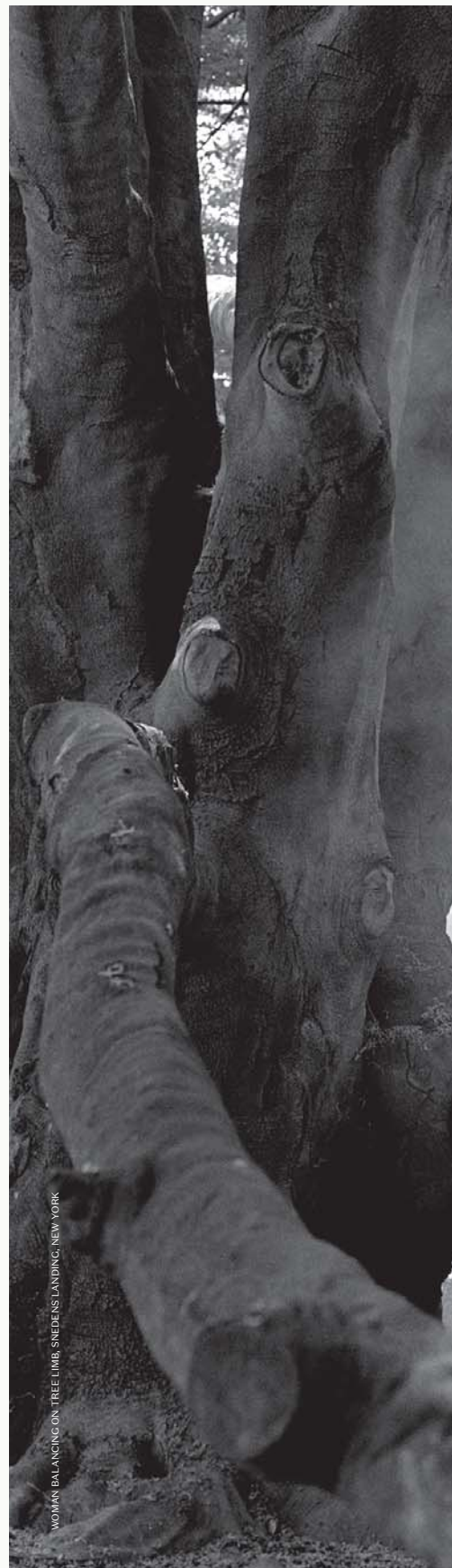
It is here where the oak, chestnut or fir braces, from a hidden nearby forest were felled to provide support. These braces criss-cross and form elaborate patterns that have always intrigued me. It is the ancient basic, unadorned part of the house that remains pure and undecorated. It contains the history of the house and if I find the right space, I feel equally at home in these garrets as I do in the basements.

Throughout the years as I have scouted locations throughout the world, and I am shown the often magnificent decorated spaces below, I will often ask to look at the forbidden place to everyone except the owners, the garret. I am often met with hesitation, but on occasion I sometimes gain the owners or caretakers trust and find myself climbing legions of stairs up, up into the upper recesses and nooks of a creaky old building. I am climbing closer and closer to something hidden, private and if I am lucky, glorious. I have reached the pinnacle of the structure and feel comforted by the strength and sturdiness of the building. On rare occasions, I am in a holy, private, powerful place, with a strong presence, unknown to most, interesting to only a few.

It is often very hard if not impossible to make picture there, but I love it just the same. These are often very cramped and small spaces and only on rare occasions, despite my many years of looking do I find the right spot.

The pictures I make there today never seem to do justice to the place. But then again, this is a private adventure that takes me climbing, searching, and yearning for something old, mysterious and transcendent. I have climbed into new territory.

— Rodney Smith



WOMAN BALANCING ON TREE LIMB, SNEDENS LANDING, NEW YORK





BERNADETTE TWIRLING, BURDEN MANSION, NEW YORK CITY

TO ME, RODNEY SMITH WAS ...

“When I think of Rodney,
I think of a time and
place where gentleness,
beauty, emotion
and humor live
in rich harmony.”

— Sabine Feuilleux, Fashion Stylist

“When I think of Rodney I think of a bygone era. I think of his commitment to his work and how whimsical, original and classic it is. I think of him at home, in his kitchen or in his studio, in his element surrounded by his photographs and the many stories that come with them.

I think of Leslie, Savannah and Jonah. About how particular he was and how focused he was on cleanliness and detail and that things were done a certain way, an old school way where process was revered and respected. I think of our long talks, belly laughs and a friendship that I will cherish forever.”

— Alec Sash, Producer

“When I think of Rodney, I think of creating a sense of style and beauty in every piece of his artwork and in every part of his life.”

— Terence Falk, Rodney Smith's Former Assistant

“When I think of Rodney, I think of order, symmetry, manicured gardens, monograms, his vision, thoughtfulness, creativity, striving for perfection, my good friend.”

— Patricia Barrett, Rodney Smith's Assistant and Master Printer

“When I think of Rodney,
I think of a true
inspiration that loved
his work and left a
beautiful legacy.”

— Suzanne Kasler, Interior Designer

“When I think of Rodney, I think of a man who was both a close friend as well as a mentor who I truly admired.”

— L'Anne Gilman, Director of Gilman Contemporary



BOON JUMPING OVER HAY BALE NO. 1, MONKTON, MARYLAND

AN ENDURING LEGACY

Rodney Smith has left a lasting impression on many lives, and it would be an understatement to say so. Oftentimes, his presence could not be ignored. And for many, his influence can still be felt.

Following are some examples of how Smith has made an impact on the lives of those around him.

“Rodney and I became very close friends from the time we met at the end of 2003 until he passed away. We were an unlikely pair of “buddies.” He was 21 years older than me and we were just different in so many ways and were at two different points in our lives. I had sadly lost my father three years earlier and had just met the woman who would soon become my wife and as I was navigating very big changes in my life, Rodney was a great friend and somewhat of a father figure. We often talked about career, relationships, finances and of course photography. He had a big impact on my life and I will take some of his advice and insights with me throughout the rest of my life.”

— Alec Sash, Producer

“Rodney literally created my path to becoming a photographer when I met him in 1974 when I was 17 years old. He not only informed my approach and philosophy about being a photographer, but also introduced me to a world of music, art and gave me the insight that it is far better to be a participant in this world rather than a spectator.”

— Terence Falk, Rodney Smith’s Former Assistant

“Roddy trained me well! I have become a neat freak since working for him. I strive to have a place for everything and want everything in its place.”

— Patricia Barrett, Rodney Smith’s Assistant and Master Printer

“Rodney was such an inspiration to me. He thought of every single detail, and he had such a minimal way of doing his interiors. To this day I have tried to emulate the palest blue linen that was just the right hint of color he had used as upholstery in one of his rooms. His edited interiors looked like his photography — artistic and graphic. I remember when I went to his house, we got to see his archive room. He had his photographs beautifully organized in custom linen books that he had designed. We also went out to see his car in the garage and it was completely customized with leather cording. It was exquisite. I always say: It is all in the details.”

— Suzanne Kasler, Interior Designer

“Rodney made me appreciate working amongst a team where each member brings his best in an uncomplicated way. He made me recognize what authentic collaboration can be. His were my favorite photoshoots to work on.”

— Sabine Feuilletoy, Fashion Stylist

“He gave me a chance when I was a young gallery and he was an established artist. It was a real pivotal moment in my career.”

— L’Anne Gilman, Director of Gilman Contemporary

DAILY ROUTINES

One of the last books I recall my dad (Rodney Smith) reading was a book called “Daily Rituals: How Artists Work” by Mason Currey. The book details the (sometimes quirky) daily rituals of a variety of talented, famous folks like Charles Darwin, Agatha Christie, Pablo Picasso, etc., and how these routines helped them best do the work they loved to do. “Daily Rituals” was a very fitting book for my dad to read for several reasons: first, he was always fascinated by people’s daily routines, as he believed that learning how one typically spent their day provided a lot of insight into a person. And second, he himself had a slightly quirky set of daily routines himself.

For starters, my dad would always wake up very early each morning, usually with the rising of the sun. By the time I usually got up in the morning (and I’m a morning person), he’d already gotten up, showered, surveyed the house and gardens, clipped the trees and the shrubs (he loved gardening) and read half of the day’s paper. He was then ready for breakfast, which he would inhale in all of three minutes, before deciding that it was time to sit in the garden room of our house and take his first nap (out of about three to five depending on the day) of the day. Our house gets incredible light that changes throughout the day as the sun moves through



the sky, and my dad liked to rotate rooms in the house accordingly, following the light. He would turn on WQXR, New York's classical music radio station, and blast it throughout the entire house, so that Beethoven would follow him wherever he went.

The rest of the day until evening would be spent in some combination of napping, snacking, reading, inspecting the house for any knicks or other imperfections and bothering his studio manager over the house-wide intercom system.

Once the clock struck 5 p.m. and evening began to creep closer, my dad's mood would change. My mom would refer to this time of day as the "witching hour," because my dad would become grumpy, critical and nearly insufferable until he was fed dinner. (I can relate, it's something I've unfortunately inherited from him as well.) But dinner wouldn't be consumed until my mom got home from work, which meant that he would sit in an alcove of the house my mom and I referred to as the "man cave" and watch the evening news, while repeatedly calling her on the phone demanding to know where she was and what was taking so long (the answer was usually traffic).

Dinner would end, and for the most part, so would my dad's day. He would return to the "man cave" to watch the ball game, or some other evening sport or televised event, before falling asleep in front of the TV and ultimately dragging himself to bed. And so his daily routine would end.

You may notice that his daily routine in no way (directly) involves photography. Other than bothering his employees, I would say the majority of his days didn't. He wasn't the type to always be taking pictures or be ready to whip the camera out at any moment. And in no way does the daily routine I described above resemble photoshoot days, where my dad would orchestrate an entire ensemble of staff, crew and models to create beautiful works of art.

But I think this time in between the magic, my dad's daily routine, in its own way gives a lot of insight into who he was. He was a perfectionist to the core. He liked talking to others, but he also enjoyed spending time alone. He was smart and well-read. He was difficult to be around sometimes. And most of all — he really loved his naps.

— Savannah Smith



TO BE OR NOT TO BE

Originally published on THE END, February 19, 2013

In a never ending quest to reveal who I am, I thought I would save any new reader the drudgery of slogging through the myriad of postings over the last years, and with little effort, get right to the heart of the matter. Here in one easy posting is an abbreviated, but still relevant list of my likes and dislikes.

Hopefully, it tells a small story of a slightly eccentric, unordinary man, struggling to find his way in the rather ordinary culture we live in.

— Rodney Smith

LIKES

Printed newspapers, well designed books and bookstores
The patina of silver
Beautifully made automobiles
Biedermeier furniture
A well tailored suit
Engraved stationery
Fireplaces with well tendered fires in winter
Manicured lawns, hedges and allees
Order and precision
Eloquent language
A sense of humor
Uniforms of all sorts
Women of style
Quiet, clean, well lighted spaces
Natural light (let there be light)
Extremely well made things of all sorts
A job well done
A beautiful woman in a classic one piece bathing suit
Intelligence
Originality
Classic music from Mozart to Avro Part
Monastic life and Gregorian Chants
Simplicity
A beautiful womans legs
Dancing
Heavyset men and women with style
National Trust Gardens
Large, majestic trees
The rural life
Anobel man
Diners, Drive-ins and Dives
Fountain Pens
Receiving letters from the U.S. Post Office
Home cooked meals
The Bourne Movies



DISLIKES

A great deal of popular culture
Tattoos
A woman's underwear revealed too easily
Bikini's on 99.9% of women
Vulgar language
Disorder
A person's stomach being exposed
Sloppy and vulgar dressing
Most, but not all of Modern Art and Photography Tract houses
Windows without mullions
Vinyl siding
Cheap construction
Too narrow lapels and ties
Most designer clothes that have more fashion than style
Women's large handbags with lots of bangles
Discordant modern music
T-shirts
Housing developments
Office buildings with tinted glass
Windows that do not open
Strip malls
Most marketing and PR
Most objects made in plastic
Most online everything (especially banking)
Recessed lighting
Being late to anything
Crowded places and small elevators
Rap and Heavy Metal Music
Graffiti
Most art films
An unexamined life
Following the leader



LIVING WELL: THE RODNEY SMITH EDITION



Royal Copenhagen

With its founding in 1775, Royal Copenhagen is one of the world's oldest companies. Established by Danish queen Juliana Maria, it remains a world-renowned porcelain manufacturer more than two centuries later. Its products can be recognized by their unique factory mark (three wavy lines symbolizing the three waterways of Denmark). The factory also introduced a crown stamp to emphasize its royal connection. Over the years, the trademark has continued to differ slightly, allowing each piece to be distinguished by its age. With superb craftsmanship and meticulous attention to detail, it's easy to see why Royal Copenhagen porcelains are popular amongst those who appreciate the finer things in life.



Tudor Rose Antiques

This New York City store specializes in antique sterling silver decorative items and fine estate jewelry. Owners and silver specialists Howard and Myra Donowitz established their Greenwich Village store in 1978 and have been a staple in the community for over four decades. People often visit the store to pick up home accessories, or to find the perfect gift, as the shop boasts a large variety of silver goods — from vases and candlesticks to flatware and teapots.

Silver items in the shop are primarily of American and English origin, and many dates back to the 19th century. However, the shop has also housed items dating back to the 18th and 17th centuries, as well as those featured in magazines and used as movie props. But perhaps it's their openness and hospitality that have likely contributed to their long-term success.

WQXR

The background to many of Rodney's working — and resting — hours is none other than WQXR, the nation's first commercial classical radio station and New York's only all-classical one. Throughout its 85 years, listeners have tuned in to listen to many of their favorite shows hosted and curated by those in the industry, including performances from the Metropolitan Opera, the New York Philharmonic and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. You can join listeners from New York City and around the world to discover the greatest composers and performers via the WQXR mobile app.



Sant Ambroeu's

When Sant Ambroeu's landed in New York City almost four decades ago, it was like a little bit of Italy arrived. The Italian restaurant group carries the legacy of Milanese cuisine, hospitality and café culture (the original Sant Ambroeu's opened in Milan in 1936).

Since its arrival on Madison Avenue, Sant Ambroeu's has served as a hub for "a mix of artists, tastemakers, fashion editors and writers" to gather and get inspired. It has grown to include nine different locations in Manhattan alone, with two other locations in Southampton, New York and Palm Beach, Florida, respectively.



Range Rover

Rodney's choice for roadside transportation was always the trusty Range Rover. Equally at home in the city or countryside, Range Rovers are the first vehicles to combine luxury and refinement with world-renowned, all-condition capabilities. Rodney's four-wheel drive — customized with his initials, of course — took him on short runs to the grocery store as well as long drives out to shooting locations and weekends in Nantucket.



Balthazar Bakery

Balthazar has long been a premier destination for brasserie-style dining in New York City's SoHo district. Its bakery Balthazar Bakery also opened on 80 Spring Street. As a restaurant, it was quite revolutionary in many respects, breaking out of the tradition of fine-dining French establishments.

The spot is still listed in guidebooks and listicles as one of the city's quintessential restaurants, and is frequently featured in popular culture. Today, Balthazar Bakery continues to serve bread, pastries, croissants and more to the neighborhood's residents and visitors.



E. Braun New York

An internationally respected textile brand with a storied past, E. Braun & Co offers the most luxurious bed, table and bath linens — sourced from all over the globe and ranging from classic and traditional tastes to contemporary styles. With its storefront on Manhattan's Park Avenue, the brand has been serving private clients and the interior design community for decades with the goal of creating something beautiful and gracious to be enjoyed for generations to come.



Biedermeier Furniture

Rodney's home was furnished with statement-making Biedermeier pieces. A style that originated in Central Europe during the first half of the 19th century, Biedermeier furniture brings humor and character to spaces with its quirky, curvy shapes that has been said to be the first influential interior style of the growing middle class at the time. Today, Biedermeier pieces continue to feel fresh and modern, often adding a touch of history to contemporary homes.

WHY I BELIEVE IN MR. CLAUS

Originally published on THE END, December 20, 2010



MAN WITH DEER HEAD, LAKE PLACID, NEW YORK, 2008

I think as we approach the Birthday of Jesus of Nazareth, along with serendipitously yours truly, I think it only fitting to now have a truly serious and profound discussion with you, my dear reader. I feel after over one year of trying to tell you (in the most intimate details) the why, the how and the what of my life and its effect on my pictures. It is now time to take one step further downtown into the protected recess of my cerebrum to discuss my need for my belief in Santa Claus.

This is not just a yearly yearning for Old Man Claus to drop down the chimney and bestow my family with gifts. Unfortunately, it is way beyond this. In order to do justice to my explanation of why Santa exists, I must retreat back, further back, putting a 50mm lens on my Hasselblad to be able to stand way back and look at the entire opus of my work.

With this overview in mind, I began to ascertain certain truths about me, my perspective on life, my subjects, my locations, my styling, my relationships, etc. But if you look even closer you begin to notice that this Christmas Eve baby has a peculiar and to many, a very outdated weltanschauung.

For those of you not versed in theological discourse, you may want to translate weltanschauung into a kind of worldview. My particular view on the world underlies everything I do photographically. Whether I am photographing a farmer in tears, or a CEO joyful for the enormous Christmas bonus he is to receive shortly. It is seen in models I choose, in the landscapes and in the locations. It is omnipresent in my work. This little unseen element, my voice, comes across in every picture I make.

Some of you are voiceless, not because you don't have one, but you haven't found it yet or you are too frightened to let it speak but that is for another workshop.

So through the years, both academically and theologically, and with an enormous amount of introspection, I began to study the

nature of man, but not just any man, this man, myself, me. Slowly over time I have discovered what this little voice has been saying throughout my photographic history. First, despite my outward appearance that the glass may appear only half full, this voice exposed quite the opposite. My photographs are a world of optimism and happiness. There is often whimsy and joy in the pictures. Secondly, and perhaps most deeply and most importantly, although I am most fundamentally embedded in the soil, my pictures speak often of a life that is just around the corner, just barely out of reach. They are plausible but it requires extra effort to be there. I guess that is why they are often referred to as aspirational. This is very important.

This is like confronting a void, and believing there is something on the other side. It is wondering at the possibilities (those that seem impossible or outside of human knowledge or perception). My photographs begin the process of believing that goodness is possible. It is a big yes to life and wonder.

In all the years of study I personally have never been able to cross over the many boundaries that can separate us from our beliefs. I am still on one side of the ledge looking across unable to make that leap. My pictures, however, definitely have made the jump. In the world that my pictures create, Santa is possible, even probable. My pictures, like in the movies of the '40s, '50s, and '60s where the good guys usually win, where happiness and beauty prevail, where life despite the hardness can have moments of great joy, exist. I do not think this is fantasy or naivety or even innocence. I think this is possibility that can be achieved, if we believe.

My pictures could be about a Christmas where something miraculous happened, and the world could possibly change, if little old me, who is stuck in my boots could just get out and join his own pictures. Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to you all.

— Rodney Smith

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