Rodney Smith embraced the curated life with a vengeance. As a young adult Smith's home and

best for the scene at hand.

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which took him from street photography to corporate photography, and

by Max Hirshfeld





work life were concurrent streams that fed off each other, and his obsessions with detail and structure translated to his photography. In his hands, creating a near perfect photograph was by making order out of chaos. Early in his career, Smith gained confidence in his ideas, and his ability to translate those ideas into images that everyone would understand became a bedrock facet of his work. In Rodney Smith: A Leap of Faith, the quietly stunning new book from Getty Publications, Smith's stellar career in photography shows us decisively that the rare leaps he took — from one genre to another - could easily carry the weight of a master's output. In essence, the book shows how his

work seems to have sprung whole from some rare sense of the way that this is how these things are supposed to look.

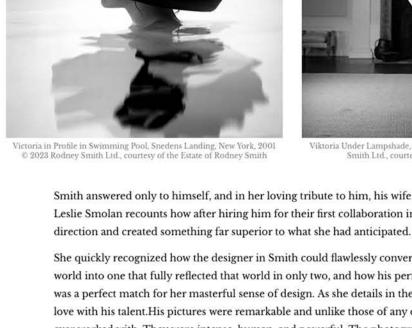


fashion style: classic universality framed with whimsy, intelligence, and a fondness for the better things in life. The fashion depictions he gave us said more about his unique take on a world and how it clothes itself than the proper drape of a luxe gown or the quality of a buttonhole in a high-end suit. Smith's fashion work implied respect for those things — even with a strict stylistic adherence to getting things right - but did not dwell on the inherent quality of the clothing as what worked

Rodney Smith created work that only he could create. His obsessions with detail and order translated seamlessly to his work, both through the aesthetic of creation and the near perfection of the outcome. And though his images speak clearly to a minute attention to detail and composition, he acknowledged "that though my pictures seem so composed, they are extremely spontaneous. 95% of the pictures I take, I didn't even know I was going to take them a few minutes before."



these pictures repeatedly, getting more and more excited, and saying and feeling to myself I can do this. This is for me. This is my life." With Smith's early nod to the spirits of Stieglitz, Strand, and Steichen, images such as Doorman, Park Avenue, New York, New York, 1971 and Easter Pilgrims, Greek Orthodox Compound, Jerusalem, Israel, 1976 exhibit such clarity of vision that one can only sit back and rejoice in the act of looking.



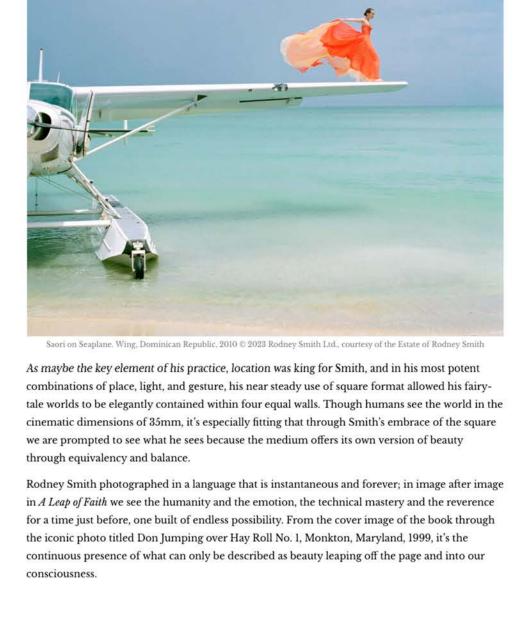


inspired me, and they still do."

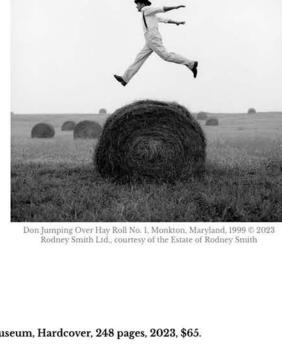
"I would hope that I am one of a kind"

field like Horst, Avedon, and Penn - had mined similar seams but without the irreverent whimsy and touches of surrealism that his work exhibits. Since fashion places demands on photographers that might be inhibiting to many, Smith's love of formality and precision intertwined with wry humor and the absurdity of daily life attracted both top brands and top collectors. Though not instantly definable as such, his fashion pictures are like portraits, albeit portraits from the map of his mind. "I would hope that I am one of a kind," said Smith.

Perhaps it was inevitable that by the early 1990's Smith would gravitate toward fashion photography, a chaotic place where precursors to his detail-obsessed methods - giants of the







Rodney Smith Retrospective at the Gilman Contemporary Sun Valley, Idaho, from June 13 to

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and artistic pursuits.

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