


PDN PHOTO
OF THE DAY

ABOUTCATEGORIES▼ARCHIVES

 Search

December 16, 2019

The Whimsy of Rodney Smith



Don jumping over hay roll no. 1, Monkton, Maryland, 1999 © Rodney Smith

“Human in Nature: The Art & Wit of **Rodney Smith**” is on display at **The Edward Hopper House** in Nyack, New York. Featuring 20 of the late photographer’s images, curated by his wife and long-time collaborator, designer Leslie Smolan, the show highlights the photographer’s love of nature as the source of witty, surreal images.

Rodney Smith’s work is the epitome of whimsy. His protagonists can be seen mid-leap over a hay bale, or floating on a lake while decked out in goggles and flippers, playing golf from a tree branch or reading upside down from one. They evoke a sense of *Alice in Wonderland* spirit, of wonder and beauty and all things nice.

In his own words: “Today, a great deal of Western culture seems rooted in remoteness, anger, alienation and squalor. I want people to see the beauty and whimsy in life, not its ugliness. I feel the need to reach out for its soul, its depth, and its underlying beauty. I represent a world that is possible if people act their best. It’s a world that’s slightly beyond reach, beyond everyday experience, but it’s definitely not impossible.”

Of course, while the images may seem like complete whimsy, that doesn’t mean they’re taken on the fly. Quite the contrary.

Everything in his images is intentional, placed perfectly, balanced just right. He said: “The secret for me in all my photographs is the location, using the environment as a studio, editing with light. I’m always attracted to a location where the hand of man is apparent.” Once you’ve got the location – then you’re left with composition, which he describes as being “like rhythm in music—it’s where everything is in sync. It’s where the whole picture comes together succinctly and carefully.” There’s great planning in his work and everything is carried out meticulously in camera. After that, he spent hours in the darkroom perfecting the prints that he saw as the ultimate creations of his efforts.

The fruits of his darkroom labors—the physical remnants of what seems like recorded daydream—are now on view.

— Samantha Reinders

“Human in Nature: The Art & Wit of Rodney Smith”
Rodney Smith
The Edward Hopper House
Through March 8, 2020

Related Articles
Obituary: Photographer Rodney Smith, 68

Rodney Smith Scolds *PDN* about March Cover
Ray K. Metzker: “Invention and play work together.”
The Guardian Angels of Film Photography

Posted in:
Fine Art

Tags:
black and white, fun, portraits, Rodney Smith, whimsy

Comments:
Comments off

Share
