

RODNEY SMITH



Gilman Contemporary Presents Rodney Smith at AIPAD The Photography Show 2026

A Deeply Personal Selection of Six Photographs Marking Ten Years Since the Artist's Passing

New York, NY — Gilman Contemporary is proud to present a curated selection of six photographs by Rodney Smith (1947–2016) at the AIPAD: The Photography Show from April 22–26, 2026. This presentation arrives at a meaningful moment: a decade since the artist's passing, and an opportunity to revisit the full arc of his singular vision. Spanning work from 1974 to 2007, the selection brings together some of Smith's earliest and most mature images, offering a rare window into the remarkable breadth and consistency of his artistic voice.

Rodney Smith remains one of the most distinctive and quietly radical figures in contemporary photography. Known widely for his fashion imagery, wit, poetry, and impeccable theatricality, Smith's deeper body of work reveals a profound humanist sensibility, an obsession with light, and a gift for the quietly surreal. Ten years on, his images feel no less vital. If anything, time has only deepened their resonance.

For Gilman Contemporary founder L'Anne Gilman, this presentation is also deeply personal. Gilman knew Smith intimately, and each of the six photographs on view reflects not only her curatorial eye but her close friendship with the artist. "These images are not simply chosen for their beauty," says Gilman. "They reflect the Rodney I knew; thoughtful, playful, endlessly searching. Presenting them at AIPAD feels like both a tribute and a conversation."

Now in only her second year at AIPAD, Gilman brings a distinctly fresh perspective to the show. Unlike many of her fellow exhibitors, she represents not only photographers but painters and sculptors, giving her gallery an unusual vantage point on image-making and its relationship to broader artistic traditions. It is through this lens that she approaches Smith's work, not merely as photography, but as an art practice in full.

The selection itself is intentionally wide-ranging. Organized as three black-and-white pairings, it brings together some of Smith's earliest known work, the luminous still life *Pears, Clinton, CT*, from 1974, alongside images made more than three decades later. This marriage of early and late work illuminates the through lines of Smith's practice: his devotion to composition and light, his dry wit, and his gift for stillness and suspense.

The first pairing sets the tone. *Pears, Clinton, CT, 1974*, a quiet, still life of pears caught in a single beam of sunlight, anchors the presentation with hushed intensity. It is paired with *Door, Vaux-le-Vicomte, France, 2004*, in which daylight streams into a darkened hallway through a door left slightly ajar. Together, the images conjure a sense of stillness and anticipation.

The second pairing leans into Smith's humor and open-ended narrative. *Jonah with Head in Hedges 1, Vienna, Austria, 1998*, presents a smartly dressed figure with his head buried in a tall hedge, absurd, elegant, and genuinely funny. Its companion, *Woman Stepping Through Doorway, Snedens Landing, NY, 1998*, continues the mystery: a woman's face mostly obscured by a door frame, a single eye staring directly into the lens.

The final pairing closes on a dreamlike note. *Caroline Seated on Edge of Pool, Long Island, NY, 2000* places a black-clad figure at the edge of a sun-drenched indoor pool, her shadow stretching across geometric tile. *Zoe Sleeping with*

Mask, Snedens Landing, NY, 2007, turns toward us: a woman reclining in a ballgown on crisp linens, walls glowing softly around her. Together, the pair creates a quiet dialogue between concealment and presence, reality and reverie.

Together, these six photographs reveal the breadth of Rodney Smith's artistic vision and honor his legacy as one of the most distinctive voices in contemporary photography. Presented at AIPAD, and drawn from the personal archive of a close friend, this selection is both a celebration and an act of remembrance; an invitation to see and linger.

Publication & Book Signing

Complementing the presentation, Gilman Contemporary will host a book signing at its AIPAD booth for *Rodney Smith: Photography Between Real and Surreal* (Silvana Editoriale), edited by Anne Morin and distributed by DAP/Artbook. Published in both English and Italian, the volume accompanies the first major retrospective of Smith's work in Italy and stands as the definitive survey of his practice. The book captures the full range of his playfully contradictory oeuvre; women in couture dresses balancing on tightropes, dapper gentlemen with cardboard boxes over their heads, optical illusions, and his supreme ability to hold illusion and reality in sublime balance. Details on the signing time will be announced shortly.

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