A PHOTOGRAPHIC STORY

STEPHEN JOYCE AND ADAM IANNIELLO

By

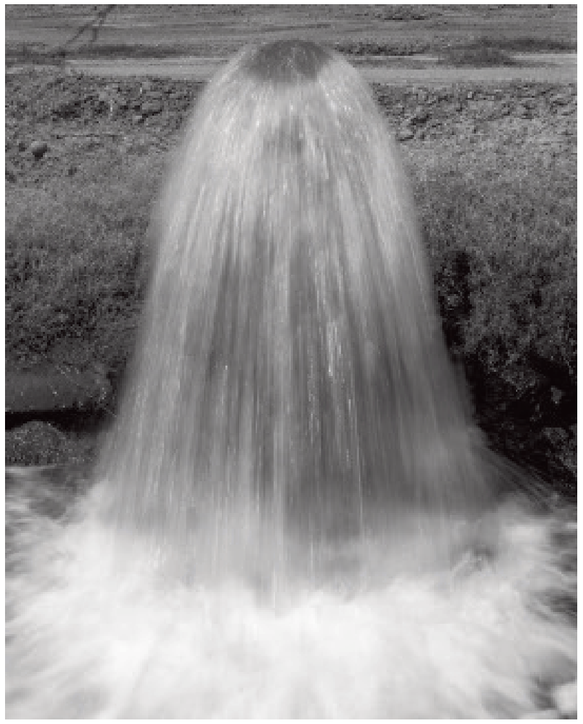
REGINALD MOORE

Contributing editor to Luncheon *and collector of beautiful books on photography, Reginald Moore hosts a conversation between two photographers, Adam Ianniello and Stephen Joyce. Together they discuss how their work evolves from the plate glass to the page or gallery wall, their use of large-format cameras, the admiration they share for the work of Robert Adams and the world of photography publishing. And on the following pages is a selection of their work.*

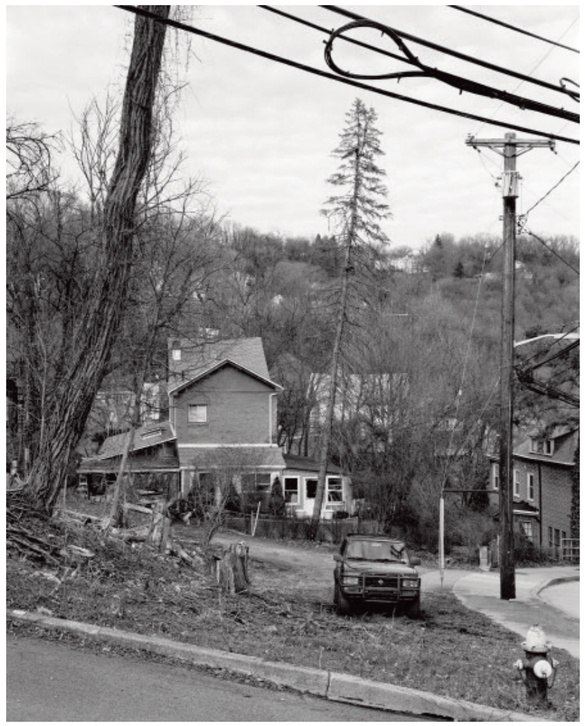
Adam Ianniello, *Dust Devil*, Millux, 2020

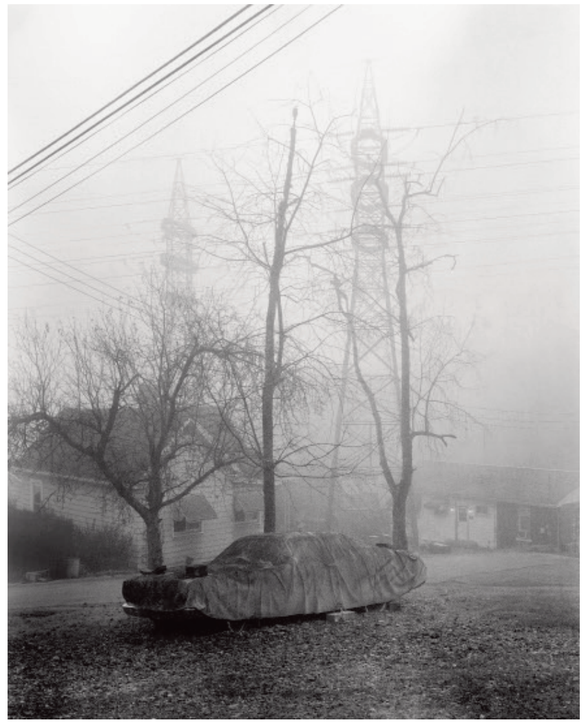
TOP: Stephen Joyce, *Wilmerding*, 2023
BOTTOM: Stephen Joyce, *Dream*, 2023

TOP: Adam Ianniello, *Girl on Swing*, Angels Point, 2018
BOTTOM: Adam Ianniello, *Ceiling Fan*, Millux, 2022



TOP: Adam Ianniello, *Angels Point Palms*, Angels Point, 2020
BOTTOM: Adam Ianniello, *Water Pipe*, Millux, 2022



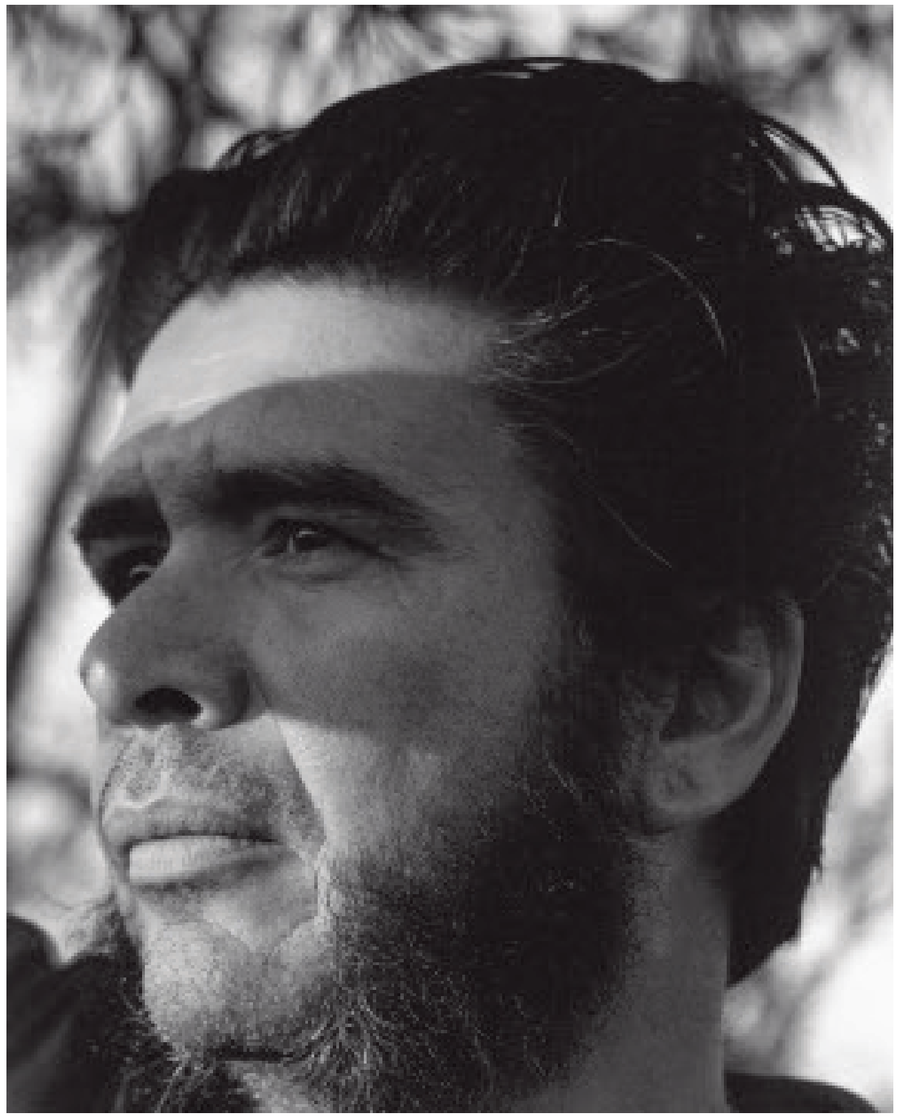


TOP: Stephen Joyce, *Elliott*, 2023
BOTTOM: Stephen Joyce, *Wall*, 2022

Adam Ianniello, *Baseball Fence*, Millux, 2020

TOP: Stephen Joyce, *Helping Hands*, 2015
BOTTOM: Stephen Joyce, *Floe*, 2023

Stephen Joyce, *Remnant*, 2023



Adam Ianniello, *Angel*, Angels Point, 2019

CONVERSATION BETWEEN

STEPHEN JOYCE, ADAM IANNIELLO AND REGINALD MOORE

‘Just give me a beautiful book, I don’t care how much it costs.’

Reginald Moore

REGINALD MOORE: James Baldwin once said, ‘An artist basically has one story to tell, and everything that he or she does is to tell that story so that everyone will finally understand it.’ What are you two hoping to communicate through the images that you make?

ADAM IANNIELLO: There is an internal world that I’ve had since childhood, much like a dream world or upside down world. When I create my work, I’m constantly trying to overlay a layer of that internal world onto whatever I’m photographing or engaging in. To me, it’s about projecting what’s inside outward through everything else. This has always been the case for me; the places where I find myself become a canvas for my own internal logic, which evolves as my life changes.

So, when you ask what I’m trying to convey, or what I’m sharing with the world, it’s essentially a personal story. As a child growing up in Brooklyn, my parents’ house had bushes around it. I often had a lot of time to myself, so I would venture behind those bushes to play with my toys, hidden from passers-by on the street. I’d observe the world from my secret spot. I’ve realized that when I started photographing at Angels Point, I was essentially doing the same thing – returning to those bushes and discovering others who were also hidden there. It’s about the idea of concealing oneself while being aware of the world outside. This dichotomy between two worlds is intriguing to me. Simultaneously, my grandparents owned a farm in Puerto Rico, and I have vivid memories of being captivated by that landscape, which was so much more rural and untamed than my home in Brooklyn. Lately with my work in the Central Valley in this place called Millux, I’ve found myself drawn back to agriculture. So everything I create is essentially a means of expressing my personal narrative through the lens of the external world.

STEPHEN JOYCE: It’s funny, I was reflecting on that quote this morning. I think maybe in the past, I wouldn’t have agreed with it, but as I get older and make more images, I would say that all artists, especially photographers, are often seeing and saying the same thing in different ways. But I think that is a very beautiful thing. For me, I came to photography in a time of grief when my father was sick and later died during my freshman year of college. So photography has always served as a diary, a way for me to channel my energy. Early on, I was showing what I was feeling – intense grief and raw sadness. My early work has a lot of billboards, signage and words in the landscape that I was trying to take in and use to say something that I couldn’t with my own words. The last few years I’ve been thinking about how place has been really important to me. So my connection to Pittsburgh is really just a connection to my dad because it’s where I grew up. My most recent project, ‘You Can’t Go Home Again’, is entirely shot in Pittsburgh, as is the vast majority of my work. For me, it’s a connection to him and who I was when I knew him. So I’d say my story is one of grief, melancholy and stillness.

REGINALD: Is it harder to photograph landscapes or people?

ADAM: Stephen and I have had this conversation before. I find portraiture to be harder. Well, it seems simpler in a way – you just place someone in front of the camera. Whereas with landscapes, there are so many options, you can move the camera left, right, up, down, adjust for the light… I’ve always had a deep emotional connection to certain places. Sometimes I’ll be driving on the road, and I’ll suddenly feel something before I see it. However, when it comes to photographing people, there’s a mix of fear and excitement approaching a subject, and it can be challenging to connect to the person while operating the camera. I don’t always like that feeling, but I believe it’s necessary. Portraits add depth within the landscapes I work through, it’s like filling an empty theatre stage with characters. It’s an ongoing struggle for me – should I pursue portraiture or not? Yet, when I do, I feel incredibly fulfilled. I’m not sure if this fully answers your question, but that’s where I stand: comfortable with the land, not so much with people. However, when I photograph a person, it transforms the work in a way that I can’t achieve when focusing solely on an environment.

STEPHEN: I feel like portraiture has always been harder for me too. It has been something I’ve often shied away from. Maybe that’s a remnant of being a really shy child, kind of a loner and in my own world. I think it was Nan Goldin who said ‘I can’t photograph somebody that I don’t love’, and that’s how I feel. The majority of the portraits I take are of my family, but I feel really uncomfortable taking a stranger’s portrait. I need some type of connection and intimacy there. So more recently, I’ve been using portraits as a way to get to know people, as we establish a friendship. It can be a little awkward, but it’s incredibly beautiful. It’s also a function of the camera that we both use, which creates a very long, drawn-out process, in which I’m forced to interact with the person in a very intimate way. And I’ve found that people aren’t always comfortable with that.

For me, I’m trying to show an absence in my life. And that’s why most of my projects have virtually no people in them. For a project that I worked on in college, the only portrait I took was of the surgeon that operated on my dad. And that was terrifying for me to take. It took me months to just get up the courage to contact this man, and schedule a date. I was anxious the whole time taking his portrait. So that’s something that I would really like to focus more on in the future as I get further away from the grief cycle, so to speak. I feel like I now want that connection with people in my work.

ADAM: I just want to bring up the word ‘courage’. Something about approaching somebody with such a large camera, and in the middle of nowhere, and trying to spark a conversation with them while you are fiddling with the bellows, there’s definitely some courage needed to go through with it. Most of my experience using this type of camera feels like playing the game Jenga – it’s as if the entire structure is constantly teetering on the edge of collapse right in front of you.

REGINALD: Once you take the picture, have it printed and present it to the public, does that photo still belong to you? Does something about the image change?

STEPHEN: I’d say once I put it out into the world, it’s no longer mine. In some sense, I think it’ll always obviously be mine because there’s a connection to my heart and my head. But once it’s out there, it’s no longer mine. And people are projecting things onto it that I might not necessarily want. But I think that’s the beauty of art in general. It’s still something I’m thinking through with my current work, especially with putting out a book recently and wanting to make my new project into a book and exhibition. You’re kind of faced with the reality that it’s not yours at a certain point.

ADAM: Yeah, I completely agree with that notion. You could say that in a way, photography can strip away the sense of authorship. The act of photography has always contained a mystical quality to me. It’s interesting to think about how some Native Americans resisted being photographed by colonists because they believed it could steal one’s soul. When I look at Stephen’s photographs in the world or in his book *If I Never Get Back*, I still feel a connection to him as a person. There’s an essence of Stephen that remains. I find this true with every photographer whose work I appreciate.

Regarding the concept of authorship and where it leads, after that game of Jenga, you’re left with a piece, just like one puzzle piece. Sometimes it doesn’t fit at all, and it remains forever a standalone. Other times, when you’re working on a project, it’s like you’re assembling a larger 1000-piece puzzle. It feels like you’re constantly missing a piece or searching for a new way to connect the pieces you already have. This, to me, captures the nature of working in this world of photography, with books and exhibitions.

It’s been a year since I released my book *Angels Point* with GOST Books, and it has taken on a life of its own. Some people are surprised when they discover I’m the creator. They knew me maybe in a physical form, but they didn’t realize it was my work. I appreciate that it can have its own personality and existence. Someone out there owns that book, and they may never know me personally but they have now taken part of my world. The book stands on its own along with others on their bookshelves, independent of who I am. I find that aspect of it quite beautiful; it allows the work to create its own identity.

REGINALD: Talk to me about the sacredness of these photos. Is there a sacredness that I sense when I’m looking at the work? I mean, these are now public images.

ADAM: I believe the sacredness lies in the very place where the photos were captured, and this, to me, is one of the most significant aspects of the journey. When I initially embarked on this project, I had never used a 4x5 view camera before. I headed to Elysian Park with the intention of mastering the camera’s use. I could roam with a tripod without notice. It provided me with various vantage points and compositional opportunities to become proficient with this intricate device.

During this early learning process, I encountered something unexpected: a part of the park that was a bit more wilderness-like, called Angels Point. It was there that I met a man aptly named Angel. He sported striking mutton chop sideburns and had this captivating aura around him. I approached him and asked if I could take his portrait. It marked one of the initial instances of using that camera for portraiture. I had him sit against a tree. Although that specific portrait didn’t make it into the book, another portrait of him shading the sun in his eyes did, which I hold dear.

REGINALD: So that’s a portrait of him in the book?

ADAM: Yeah. So, the first and only portrait you see in the book is of Angel and the rest of the book sequence is structured as if you’re wandering through his eyes.

REGINALD: So, the photos were taken at a place called Angels Point, the guy’s name is Angel and you’re looking at the photos from his point of view.

ADAM: Yes, it’s a triple entendre. When I approached him to ask for a portrait, he mentioned wanting to read my palm. I was taken aback and asked, ‘Really?’ He affirmed, saying, ‘Yes, I want to read your palm.’ He proceeded to tell me that I’m someone who tends to make decisions slowly, which led to a conversation between us. After a while, I continued on my path, and he went his way. As I left that area of the park, I happened to glance at a sign, and it read ‘Angels Point’. That’s when it struck me that there was something significant happening here. I felt compelled to return to this place.

A week later, I did go back and saw him again, strolling about. That’s when I began spending more time with him, inquiring about where he had been and where he was heading. I asked if I could walk alongside him. This blossomed into a friendship that allowed me to explore the landscape there. This friendship was rooted in a sense of sacred connection, and without this man, I don’t think I would have undertaken this project. It was like experiencing a strange, deja vu-like moment that made me realize I needed to invest years in this place.

When you contemplate the sacredness of photography and the serendipitous events that become intertwined with your work through what unfolds before you, it’s truly remarkable.

One of my favourite images in this book, which I actually captured quite early in the project, features a girl on a tree swing, looking out into the world below, her mother and aunt taking photos of her. When I embarked on this project, I was aiming to create 4x5 large-format photographs that conveyed a sense of candidness and movement, various aspects that are usually missed when you’re using this camera. When I took that photograph of the girl, Angel was right there with me.

I believe everyone has that one photograph when they embark on a project or start working in a new place. It’s the image that serves as the initial stepping stone, and you find yourself returning to it time and again. For me, this image of the tree swing became the linchpin of the entire project; it informed everything else I did. Angel acted like a lucky charm, and there were times when we would go out for walks, and I would bring him prints. However, there came a point when I lost contact with him, and I didn’t see him for quite a while. As a result, most of the later work was done without his physical presence but maybe a mental presence.

STEPHEN: That’s really great. I didn’t know any of that, Adam. For me, the first page of my book says it’s ‘For my father’, and the image opposite that is one of the only remaining parts of Forbes Field, the baseball stadium that was demolished in 1970. It was a place where my father and his father would go to games together. So for me, that image was really important to have first and it is, as you say, sacred. While taking it, I felt a connection to the immediate past that is my father but also the past that is my grandfather who I never met. It was a profound thing for me, and I ended up reshooting it multiple times.

Sometimes when I’m out photographing a landscape, I feel like there’s somebody watching or something there backing me up. I don’t really ever go out with a plan when I shoot; I might have a neighbourhood that I want to explore that day, but beyond that, I don’t really have specific shots that I want to get. Sometimes I go out at night alone and shoot, other times it’s before the sun comes up. There’s really no planning for me. But there’s something about photographing with that camera, alone, that connects me to something spiritual. Whether it’s real or not, it’s real to me. I feel it in that moment, and it is a connection to something higher. That might just be my subconscious trying to protect myself and my heart, but I do feel like there’s this sacred aspect when I’m out shooting and I just need to explore and fully give into that.

REGINALD: Something that I enjoy hearing photographers talk about is the work of other photographers. What does the work of Robert Adams mean to either of you?

ADAM: I don’t know if you’re aware, but I received a letter from Robert Adams this year. I had sent him a copy of my book after another great influence and friend, Bryan Schutmaat, suggested I do so. To be honest, I didn’t anticipate a response, but receiving that letter from Bob with my name on it, discussing my work – it was a profound moment. It solidified everything I’ve been striving for as a photographer throughout my life. It felt like an extraordinary validation. I’ve received many compliments in my life, but seeing that letter truly took me by surprise.

I’ve often pondered why Robert Adams holds such significance for me, and I don’t believe it’s solely about photography. It’s more about an ideology. His ideology is something that I, along with many others, aspire to emulate or carry with us. There’s also something inherently spiritual about him in the context of the landscape. He, to me, embodies someone who possesses a deeper understanding of what’s happening in this country and the places he inhabits. That sensibility, that vision and his ability to articulate it, sometimes even more than his photographs, affect me profoundly.

‘So, everything I create is essentially a means of expressing my personal narrative through the lens of the external world.’

Adam Ianniello

‘For me, I’m trying to show an absence in my life. And that’s why most of my projects have virtually no people in them.’

Stephen Joyce

Robert Adams has effectively created a school of photography, with numerous photographers using him as both an aesthetic and project guide. In certain books, much like Robert Frank or Walker Evans, you can observe the emergence of different schools of photography. When I look at a Robert Adams book, it has the power to shift my internal emotional state. It has a calming effect on me. After reading his work, I might step outside, gaze at the sky, observe a tree, or simply stroll down the street, listening to the birds. Not many artists have that impact on me. With some photographers, their work can feel cluttered, overwhelming, or overly complex. However, the way Robert Adams simplifies images while keeping them modern and compelling – constantly inviting you to explore them, to understand their morality – is precisely why I find his work so influential.

STEPHEN: I totally agree – Robert Adams has had the biggest influence on me and my photography career, more than any other photographer. When I saw his show ‘The Place We Live’ at Yale in 2012, it was my introduction to his work. In addition to the prints on the wall, he had hand-carved books made fully out of wood, which I found to be something special, so I decided to really dive into his work. And after my father died, I sent him a letter and I wasn’t expecting a response either. I told him how his work had really helped me through my grief, and he responded with a letter and a copy of his book, *Prayers in an American Church*, that he put together after his sister died.

I grew up Catholic, I went to Catholic school my whole life up until college. So I think there’s something religious or spiritual in his practice, his imagery, and in his connection to the land. I think over the years, he’s the one person I never get sick of, I always come back to his work. He is the photographer, more than anyone, that I think every shot is so deliberately composed. So when you think it’s messed up in some way, or that he should have moved to the left or right, you just need to look a little longer. An obvious example of this is *Pikes Peak (Colorado Springs)*, the image of the Frontier gas station that cuts off part of the sign. His images might be slightly askew the first time you look at them, but the more you look at them, you notice that everything is so deliberate. It’s methodical, contemplative and meditative.

He’s meant so much to me personally as we’ve corresponded over the years, through letters mostly. And he’s just been a hero of mine. He’s the one person that was so generous of his time to write to me, given what I was going through in that moment. He’s been a guiding light. And you know, Adam, that even this past January, I flew from the East Coast to Los Angeles and went on a road trip with a friend to Reno to see his other career retrospective ‘American Silence’. I wouldn’t do that for anyone else.

REGINALD: Let me ask a technical question. Are we shooting digital or film or both?

ADAM: It’s funny that you brought this up because I work in commercial and fashion photography here in Los Angeles. I assist various photographers in digital imaging, and I’m constantly engaged with digital cameras in my professional life. However, when it comes to my personal work, it’s all made with film. It’s always been that way, and lately, I’ve been leaning more towards large format. It’s not just about the aesthetics; it’s about the entire process of making the image.

Working with it is about space, about the process of observation. You’re dropping that camera into the world and having it translate what you see upside down and backwards, then grappling with it. This process is so immersive through the ground glass. It’s no longer your game; it dictates what it wants from the scene, what it’s going to capture. I cherish that feeling. It’s why I stick with this cumbersome and slow camera, even though I often make mistakes. With large format, you see something, stop, think you’re in the right space, then set up the camera and realize it’s not right. Everything needs to change.

Digital may come back into my life, especially if I delve into more photojournalistic work on deadlines, although the magic for me lies in this particular analogue process.

STEPHEN: I have a pretty similar viewpoint. I mean, I obviously love all things photography, so I own a digital camera, but I rarely use it. I would say 95 per cent of my work is on film, and maybe 85 per cent is 4x5. What you were talking about with this camera made me think of Henry Wessel and how he wouldn’t look at his contact sheets for years. He’d contact them and put them away and then come back to them when he had some emotional distance from the images. I think that distance is inherent when using this camera. Because every step of the process is so slow, by the time you develop and contact it, it could be weeks or months later. In fact, I took a digital class in school and shot digitally for the first week and my teacher responded by saying that I wasn’t allowed to shoot digitally any more because my images had gone downhill so much using that camera. So since then, most of my work has been large format, with the majority of it being black and white, as it conveys exactly what I’m trying to accomplish in terms of the mood.

REGINALD: Adam, let’s talk about Smog Press. There is an abundance of independent publishers here in the States that are producing beautiful photography books. Like Bryan Schutmaat and Matthew Genitempo at Trespasser; Will Sharp at Black Flower Publishing; Paul Schiek at TBW Books; and Clint Woodside at Deadbeat Club. Just give me a beautiful book, I don’t care how much it costs.

ADAM: Working on *Angels Point* with Stuart Smith and Katie Clifford from GOST opened my eyes to the beauty of collaboration in creating a book. This experience sparked a desire to continue down this path. During the pandemic, my friend Taylor Galloway and I ventured out to Rachel, Nevada – near Area 51. We photographed side by side – him in colour, me in black and white. When we returned, we realized we’d created a body of work worthy of a book.

As we worked on it, we had a revelation: why not start a publishing company in Los Angeles? Thus, Smog Press was born. Our approach is kinda distinct. We’re not interested in competing at the same level as major publishers or working within the established canon of photography. Instead, we seek out photographers we admire and say, ‘We want to create a photobook with you. We know you’re working on a larger project, but what else do you have? Share everything with us, and let’s see what we can create together.’ We’re sort of like a short stories publisher, and this approach led us to collaborate with Kyle Myles on a new book titled *So Many Beautiful Reasons*.

REGINALD: Let’s step into the mutual admiration society. I would be interested in hearing how the two of you came to know each other’s work. And your thoughts on the work.

ADAM: You know, it was Taylor Galloway who introduced us. We were on our way to see a show at Long Beach, and Taylor asked if he could pick up his friend along the way. That’s when we picked up Stephen. I remember driving down with this guy with long hair who had attended Bard and was a photographer. And instantly, I wondered, could he be pretentious? Who knows? [*Laughter.*]

After we saw the show we started talking outside. I discovered that Stephen was a large-format photographer, working in a similar way to the ‘Angels Point’ project I was focused on at the time. I was genuinely captivated because I hadn’t met many people personally who used that type of camera or were shooting in black and white. So, we spent the entire evening engrossed in photography discussions, much of which revolved around Stephen Shore. You took classes with Shore at Bard. I thought, ‘This is someone I aspire to be like.’ I never pursued an MFA, and my formal photography education was minimal as I studied finance in college. In contrast, Stephen had dedicated more educational time to this craft, more critique. What fascinated me beyond his knowledge was his soft-spoken sensibility, something you don’t often encounter in the world of photography. That was my first impression of Stephen.

STEPHEN: When I moved to Los Angeles in 2018, I asked my friend Jesse Chan if he knew anyone there since I had no friends there. He connected me to Taylor, and when we went to that show you mentioned, I distinctly remember hanging out with you, Adam, all night. And from there, we just grew a friendship, and we went out photographing in Elysian Park. My time in LA was pretty short since I moved back to the East Coast at the beginning of the pandemic but I look back at that time so fondly because I got to connect with you and Taylor. I’m so glad I met these two lovely men and the best thing that came out of that year was our friendship.

Our friendship has really grown since then as you started working on ‘Angels Point’, and your new project ‘Millux’, which I have to say is really strong. Obviously, our styles kind of mirror each other’s in some ways, but I love how the new work is so rooted in real people’s experience working on a farm and what that looks like. It’s a kind of new way of documentary shooting, where you show people and the land as they are, but also include some more experimental shots. I’m thinking of the one with water coming out of the pipe in the middle of the frame. It looks to me like someone’s hair flowing in the wind. I just don’t know what is happening there and it’s so confusing to me. I love that image so much. I feel like these more abstract photos add to the more traditional documentary style of reporting. And I love how your portraits at Angels Point offset the landscapes really well. I’ve always enjoyed how you are able to place people within the landscape, and I think you do it so well.

I view your more abstract photos as sublime, they are spiritual and holy. You’re often shooting into the sun, which most people are taught to not do. I love doing it too, just to see the results. But these ones of dust devils are so nice. For somebody who is from the East Coast, imagery from California’s Central Valley is so closely tied to the Great Depression, the 1930s and 1940s in my mind. I like that you’re doing something that is elevating it in a way. There’s a spiritual aspect there. That’s why I keep coming back to those ones in particular, because it’s doing something that 100 per cent straight documentary photography wouldn’t necessarily do.

ADAM: Thank you for sharing that. It’s beautiful to hear because this is precisely why I began photographing in the Central Valley. I wanted a complete change from what I was accustomed to previously. My fascination with dust devils was the catalyst. I first encountered them during a drive out from San Francisco for work, especially near the Grapevine Mountains leading into Los Angeles. The image of a dust devil sparked a question: could I make an image of one with my large-format camera? Could I approach it, set up the camera, pre-focus, and somehow capture it? This marked the beginning, shaping how I approached photography in this new environment.

I’m actively working to distance myself from the instinctual nature of cameras. I strive to treat them more like tools for creating moving images or even akin to a Leica in street photography, but with added movement. Yet, I still aim to maintain a sense of stillness within the frame. It’s about finding a balance, a visual equilibrium. Certain photo books like Vanessa Winship’s *She Dances on Jackson* have greatly influenced me. Her ability to capture moments in the American landscape, like a lone deer alongside a highway or a water ripple on a pond, has reshaped my perception of large-format photography.

I’ve been drawn to Dust Bowl photographs and photographers like Walker Evans. I’m working on bridging the gap between that era of the 1930s and 1940s photography with the present. It’s about layering these influences, mixing them, and creating connections. Many of these images are straightforward and direct, but they coexist with the rugged, dusty and wiry landscapes of the desert farmland.

REGINALD: Stephen, your new work looks dark. And I don’t mean the tone. I mean, actually taken in the dark, correct?

STEPHEN: Absolutely. Like I said, this project, ‘You Can’t Go Home Again’, is entirely shot in Pittsburgh, largely over the past two years. There’s a stillness in my images. Obviously, they are still photographs, but I think there’s a stillness of what’s contained within the frame. Recently, I have been really interested by photographing at night. Obviously, Robert Adams’ ‘Summer Nights’ is an important project for me here. It’s funny, when you go out and photograph on a Friday or Saturday night, you see people out at a bar or going to the club, and I’m there taking photographs with this vintage camera.

I just keep going back to the word ‘stillness’, because there’s nobody bothering me. I can take a 30-minute exposure and see what comes out of it. I’m not very precise with my night photography, I kind of just take them and see what happens. And that’s the beauty for me. But I think, back to my earlier point about feeling this presence when I photograph, I feel like there is a spiritual aspect of night shooting. It’s a great time to reflect and meditate. I also think the dark places are in a way inherent in Pittsburgh, in what the city has gone through with certain neighbourhoods being completely gentrified, while other neighbourhoods are left needing financial help from the local and state governments to fund certain aspects of public services and infrastructure. So that kind of darkness is really important for me to show when I’m trying to represent this place that I care about so much.

ADAM: I’d like to share my thoughts on Stephen’s work. One aspect that truly stands out to me, and not all photographers can achieve this skill effectively, is his ability to create complex compositions. While many photographers simplify scenes to the best of their abilities, Stephen takes a different approach. He steps back, mentally arranges elements, and meticulously composes his images. I’m not sure how much time you spend peering through that ground glass, Stephen, but the result is evident in your photographs.

When you examine some of Stephen’s work, you’ll notice layers upon layers etched into the background. There’s a meticulous placement of elements – electric wires cutting diagonally across the frame, a tree subtly swaying, windows, cars. It’s as if he bestows a profound sense of dignity upon the space he captures. His compositional skills are beyond what you typically encounter in contemporary photography. Sometimes, we might overlook the art of composing slowly and gracefully, but Stephen, you undoubtedly possess this ability.

STEPHEN: Thank you, that’s really nice to hear. It makes me think of my eternal struggle with Instagram and digitally representing yourself as a photographer, because I think a lot of my images just don’t translate to a phone screen. And sometimes, they don’t translate to even a computer screen. That’s something that I have struggled with over the years, and that’s why I was hesitant about the book form, because I think a lot of my images work better large and on the wall. Like you said, there are little details that I deliberately include, that you just don’t see if it gets printed in a book or on your phone. So that’s kind of my struggle right now, trying to figure out the best form, the final form.

ADAM: I’m also interested in cars because in this project the cars become sort of these portraits, or they stand in for the people.

REGINALD: Yes, like that close-up of a truck headlight.

STEPHEN: I was photographing these cars not really thinking anything of it, knowing only that I was gravitating to them. I love that the cars can serve as portraits in a way. I think my personal relationship to cars comes from the fact that my family was working class, so we didn’t go on many vacations growing up. Instead, we went on drives. We would go to Altoona, which is another little rail town in Pennsylvania, or other places locally, as that was all we could afford. Our cars were always beaten up and crappy. I think that’s why I was initially interested in representing these cars, because they were cars that felt like home.

ADAM: I know, that’s definitely how I feel about them. It’s like, the car is such a part of a person’s life, especially in a place like Pittsburgh, you know? There is such personality in these cars. And there’s a sort of loneliness about them, too. There’s an isolation in these photographs of the cars, of people that you say that have been disenfranchised by a system and a state. But it’s also looking at these photographs. I’ve never been to Pittsburgh before. I’ve heard a lot about it. And I’ve seen it in movies. I guess *Deer Hunter* is filmed in Pittsburgh. At the beginning of the film, there’s an establishing scene of a car driving into an old bar. And it’s just smoky in the background. You know, these guys are working in the steel mills. It just feels like America to me, you know, it feels like working-class America, Bruce Springsteen America. The politicians say ‘Fighting for the Soul of America’ – well, this is the soul. The soul of working-class America.