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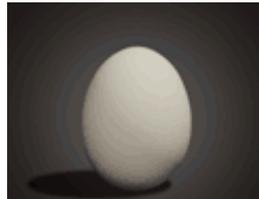
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PHOTOBLOGGERS EXPOSED VII

Andrew Smith: Quiet Reflections On Photography

by **Chantal Stone**

*Photographer **Andrew Smith** has a style that is quiet, reflective, even philosophical. He's a musician by trade, a middle school music teacher, from a family of musicians. His photographs echo the quiet contemplation*

and focus required of his profession. His photoblog, [Visual Realia](#), is a journey through the mind and world of this thoughtful artist. Recently I had the pleasure to talk with Andy about his life and his work:

Chantal Stone: *What are some of the things you like to photograph?*

Andrew Smith: I probably have too wide of a range of topic choices for the good of my site. I tend to like color, black and white, duo-tones and infrared. I think that variety of ways of expressing the image is part of what interests me...Part of it for me is not only the photo itself, but also the process. I like thinking about the shot, shooting it, and working with it afterward.

CS: *Why and when did you start your photoblog?*

AS: Started in spring, entirely for my needs...having a full time job, kids, etc., there is every excuse in the world *not* to go out and shoot. Having a blog where one hopes to post most days forces me to go out and



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photograph. No excuses...self motivation.

CS: *What styles of photography are you attracted to?*

AS: This probably explains why my own photography is so scattered. I find each style brings interest in its own way. I guess photos that "express" something beyond the literal are my favorite.



CS: *Is that what you try to do...express something beyond the literal?*

AS: Sometimes, but certainly not always. I'm currently working with macros of music themes, and I don't know that I'm reaching for anything beyond in those...although you may have noticed the quotes [on my photoblog]. I do enjoy trying to find something that is somehow related.

CS: *I was going to mention that...what made you start adding the quotes with the images?*

AS: That goes back to the process. Selfish! I like looking for relevant quotes, almost in a puzzle-like fashion. I can't say I thought about it; it just seemed like that was obvious for me. Photos evoke words and thoughts, and sometimes quotations add to those thoughts.

CS: *How would you describe your body of work?*

AS: Body of work...an attempt to see life close up, far away, and just attempt to appreciate it. It's too easy to ignore the "little" things around us, and my photography is an attempt to force myself to see what's around me. If I'm lucky, maybe some of the shots will do the same for a viewer or two.

CS: *What do you think your photography says about you as a person?*

AS: Since I tend to have a wide variety (ok, scattered) of interests and styles, that probably reflects on me. I like "exploration." I've always enjoyed the exploratory aspects of science, for example...maybe a curiosity.

CS: *Your landscape series...is it a cohesive, continuous project, or just something you add to here and there, shooting sporadically?*

AS: I believe that my landscape photography is cohesive only in retrospect; by that, I mean that I don't consciously select only subjects

that meet specific "guidelines." Looking at the photos as a group, I assume one can find similarities that run through many. It's always difficult to assess one's own work, but I think I'm drawn to photographs and scenes with a sense of line.

CS: *Do you actively seek these particular scenes, or do you just come across them while walking, wandering?*

AS: The nature/landscape photograph series continues to develop through both intention and happy accidents! When time permits for jaunts to photograph, I'll certainly have scenes in mind that I hope to add to the collection. As my work and family life tend to minimize time for those pursuits, my camera almost always travels with me.

Even on my hour-plus commute to and from work, on a route I've traveled for years, I am constantly trying to be aware of the beautiful elements along the path, and I'm still surprised at what new things pop to my attention. If I notice such a new item, or the light seems to be striking something in a fresh way, I'll pull off to a side road and take advantage of the opportunity.

CS: *Do the areas that you photograph have any significant meaning to you, your life?*

AS: There are local areas that I'll be pulled to, often because of past experiences. My first job as a teen was at a local state park, and I'm very appreciative of the area, much more so than the typical area residents who seem to forget they have this amazing place in their back yard. Positive memories from childhood trips will motivate returns...While some areas hold special meaning, I find myself much more readily finding interesting subjects in the ordinary places. I'm quite happy to be driving along after a busy day and stumble across great light and shadows from a perfect sky.

CS: *Explain the role of music in your life.*

AS: Music was always a part of both my immediate and extended family's life. It was always there and always seemed obvious to participate in it; there never seemed to be a question about whether to be a part of it. As a music teacher now, I see students

that seem very comfortable with music in their lives, and sometimes comforted by it. Working with 10 to 14 year olds, I see their young adult personalities forming, and for some, music plays a very important part.

Music and photography (as well as the other arts) fit together incredibly neatly. Certainly, throughout history, the various art forms changed



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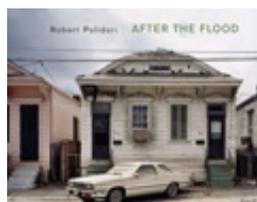
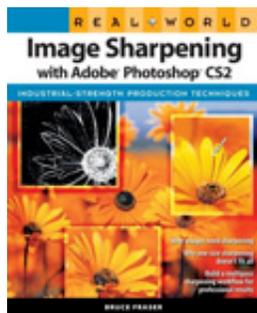
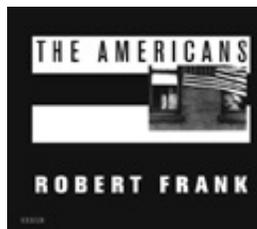
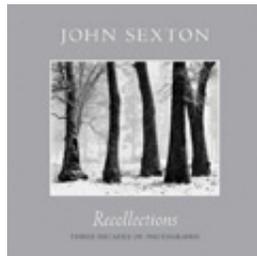
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together and changed each other. At times it seems as if there is only one "Art" form, and there are just various ways of reaching for it.

I can remember a trip to the Smithsonian and seeing a full-size Kandinsky painting for the first time. The work clearly drew me in, as did his other pieces. It wasn't until some time later that I read about him and looked at some of his writings. Kandinsky's beliefs about the interconnectedness of music and his visual art were quite strong, and he spoke of his visual pieces in musical terms.

CS: *Your 'music' images seem to have a sensual feel to them...is that something intentional on your part?*

AS: Sensuality in the works is an interesting thought. I didn't set out to purposely do so, but it could be a byproduct of the role of art. If art is expression, and a piece is successful in some way, there could be many feelings involved. Sensuality seems to be heavily influenced by line and movement in life, music, dance and visual arts, so the expressive lines of the musical instruments bring along a great sense of beauty.



CS: *What do you hope to achieve through your photography...Where do you hope it leads?*

AS: Certainly, part of it is a selfish use for me. A sanity keeper. Having said that, I'm as egotistical as the next person, and if someone expresses interest in a photo, I'm certainly glad to hear it...Leading... well, hopefully more folks to view it, and offer feedback. Beyond that, who knows?

Posted by: CHANTAL STONE

[Chantal's Site](#)

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