Beat: Arts

Fantastic Rodney Smith Photography Exhibition

Palazzo Roverella, Rovigo, Italy

Bologna Motorvalley Italy , 10.12.2025, 21:22 Time

USPA NEWS - Rodney Smith. Elegance, Irony and Dream: the Great Retrospective at Palazzo Roverella by Roberto Magni and Daniela Comi – Foto ReD Photographic Agency

A journey into the photographic elsewhere of a timeless master
In Rovigo, inside the historic halls of Palazzo Roverella, one of the most fascinating photography exhibitions of recent years is underway: “Rodney Smith. Photography Between the Real and the Surreal”, the first major Italian retrospective dedicated to the New York photographer Rodney Smith (1947–2016). Open from October 4, 2025 to February 1, 2026, the exhibition brings together more than one hundred images that trace the evolution of an artist capable of transforming reality into an elegant, ironic, and suspended theatre.
For us, who live photography every day, this exhibition is not just a curated display: it is an immersive experience, an invitation to step into a parallel world where logic bends to poetry and light becomes narrative.

Who Rodney Smith Was: the Poet of Elegant Absurdity
Born in New York in 1947, Rodney Smith grew up in a cultured and cosmopolitan environment. He studied theology and philosophy—disciplines that deeply shaped his worldview. His photographic training took place alongside Walker Evans, one of the great American masters.
His inspirations were many:
• the formal purity of Ansel Adams
• the narrative strength of Margaret Bourke-White
• the compositional elegance of Henri Cartier-Bresson
• the poetic surrealism of Magritte
• the cinematic tension of Hitchcock
• the refined symmetry of Wes Anderson
The result is a unique language: impeccable black and white, perfect compositions, subtle irony, elegant figures in impossible yet believable situations.
Smith loved to say: “I venture into the world to breathe its dubious reputation and its humor, to see more clearly, to seek purpose and knowledge, to open myself up, to exuberantly and relentlessly grasp the light.”
A sentence that encapsulates his poetics: photography as exploration, as play, as revelation.

The Rovigo Exhibition: a Journey in Six Sections
Curated by Anne Morin and produced by Silvana Editoriale, the retrospective is organized into six thematic sections:
1. Elegance as a Form of Thought
2. Everyday Surrealism
3. The Landscape as Stage
4. The Body as Geometric Line
5. Irony as a Key to Interpretation
6. Light as Revelation
Each section is a piece of Smith’s artistic vision, an invitation to look at the world with different eyes.

A World Suspended Between Real and Surreal
Smith’s photographs seem to come from a parallel universe where everything is possible—provided it is elegant, harmonious, and slightly absurd. He worked exclusively with film, with meticulous attention to composition and to the selection of scenic elements.
Among the most iconic works on display:
• “James in Inner Tube with Duck, Lake Placid, New York, 2006”

• “Rovigo Skyline, Hudson River, New York, 1995”
• “Don Jumping over Hay Roll No. 1, Monkton, Maryland, 1999”
Each image is an invitation to slow down, observe, imagine.

Our Reportage: Observing Those Who Observe
As Foto ReD Photographic Agency, we created a reportage inside the exhibition, aiming to capture not only the works but also the relationship visitors establish with them.
We photographed:
• absorbed gazes
• gestures of wonder
• people leaning in to examine details
• visitors losing themselves in geometries
• moments of pure contemplation
It felt like witnessing a second exhibition: the one that comes to life in the eyes of those who look. A silent dialogue between audience and author, which we tried to capture with respect and sensitivity.

Why This Exhibition Matters
In an age dominated by speed and visual saturation, Rodney Smith reminds us that photography can still be:
• poetry
• rigor
• play
• mystery
• harmony
• dream
His work is a lesson in slowness and wonder—one that we, as photographers, feel deeply.

Conclusion: An Experience to Be Lived
The Rodney Smith retrospective at Palazzo Roverella is a journey into imagination, beauty, and the intelligent lightness of an artist who reinvented photographic language without ever losing his humanity.
For us, telling its story through our reportage was a privilege. For those who will visit, it will be an encounter that lingers in memory.
Signed Roberto Magni & Daniela Comi Foto ReD Photographic Agency

Article online:
https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-26333/fantastic-rodney-smith-photography-exhibition.html

Editorial office and responsibility:
V.i.S.d.P. & Sect. 6 MDStV (German Interstate Media Services Agreement): Roberto Magni Daniela Comi By Foto ReD Agency

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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619