

**Introduction of Holly Lynton's Bare Handed by J. Sybylla Smith
for Got Punctum? Episode #49**

October 2022

Holly, we met when I first encountered *Sienna, Turkey Madonna* in your exhibit at the Miller Yezerski Gallery in 2014. I made a point to introduce myself - I was mesmerized by the strikingly simple palette, the floating feathers suspended like a snow flurry, and the serenity, wisdom, and grace emanating from the young woman as she tenderly tended her flock. I thought then - who are you and how did you do this?!

Fast forward, through studio visits and dinner during Paris Photo, I remain intrigued by *how* you see and *what* you see, such a blend of detail and wide scope. I find an epicness to your images. Terence Washington writes in his essay in your book, *Swinging in the American Breeze*, that you capture slightly off-kilter ordinary moments, he poetically notes you "present the moment between moments."

I was delighted to read of your creative practice, acknowledging how you made the point – aesthetics structures time – how a photo can hold a fleeting moment of the ever-flowingness of time. Your images brim with form, content, and meaning– and most importantly they possess the essential element as noted by Grace Elizabeth Hale who you quote in your acknowledgements – "A photograph needs context."

Seemingly serendipitous choices led you to the American South, rural areas with people practicing traditional craftsmanship, you encountered those living in relationship to the land, the waterways, working with the animals and insects that sustain all our lives. You discovered the fantastical – the liminal space when boundaries fade, and a union of sorts is forged – you with your subject, your subject with their task, the history that brings this moment to us living in a contemporary mechanized and digitized world. It all collides, and hangs suspended like the turkey feathers in the first image that introduced you to me.

You have mediated a complexity to deliver a simplicity. You meld emotional connection, attention to craft (yours and your subjects), a seeking of form and composition, the fleeting play of light and shadow, and suspended moments. You catch these inside a flurry of activity.

Your engagement with the subject, which is all really about practice, about returning, becomes a repository – a contemporary stance blending art and history. Traditional craftsmanship becomes a portal, and you dive in deeply.

I am impressed with your keen observation and ability to listen to all the ghosts, thoughts, contradictions, and mysteries that this creative journey has unleashed. You are attentive, you bring your presence by returning. You have engaged the method of photography – magical in its ability to wrestle time and all our associations, and allow them to meet with our experience, calling to question our perception, how we see. You illuminate the layered intersection of time and meaning and ask us to consider our perceptions. A photo allows us to see time in multi-dimensions, the past, time's incessant movement, and the ever-present, open-ended future.

I quote Grace Elizabeth Hale again: "And yet, the photograph is also always a representation—it is not a piece of the world, like a fossil, but a reference of reflected light. History is one of the meanings that can be produced at this juncture of difference and sameness."

In addition to these luscious visuals, poetic texts and the deep context framed in the 2 incredible essays - we must talk book design! Because the thoughtful layers of how this book becomes an experience are purposeful and are not lost on me! As I mentioned - we have a lot to unpack.