

AMERICAN CONNECTION

It takes a distinctive talent to make other people laugh, especially with a photograph. **David Carol** talks to Susan Burnstine about honesty, humour, photography books . . . and non-books.

susanburnstine.com



Boy with photo, 2010



Joe with fish, Baffin Island, 1997

During my years as a standup comic, one of the first things I learned was that the best humour is born from raw, unadulterated observations that universally connect everyone through truth. Whether the origin is rooted in frustration, anger, curiosity or absurdity, it takes a distinctive talent to make others laugh, especially within the context of a photograph.

Since the early 1990s, New York photographer David Carol has created a collection of remarkable images that repeatedly inspire viewers to take pause, reflect and smile. While Carol enjoys being admired for creating funny photographs, he confesses it can be a double-edged sword of sorts. 'Do I really want funny pictures?' he asks. 'I suppose my answer is I have no choice; I shoot what I'm attracted to.'

Carol recalls that one night while having dinner with Anne Wilkes Tucker, former curator of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, she said his photos always made her laugh or smile. He became conflicted and confessed he aspired to create

'In real life I love funny things, so why shouldn't it translate into my work?'

photographs of social relevance that transcended humour – and was concerned all his photos looked the same.

Tucker helped facilitate his understanding of his strengths by explaining that the worries he described were due to having a unique style and perception of the world. 'In real life I love funny things, so why shouldn't it

translate into my work?' he says, 'In fact, if my work is honest it has to have my humour, sarcasm and certainly my opinion of the world in it.'

Carol attended the School Of Visual Arts, studied with Lisette Model at the New School for Social Research and



Topless dancers, Florida, 2004

takes pride in admitting that since the age of 21 his only source of income has come from the photography industry. Currently, his full-time job is director of photography for CBS Outdoor and he is a contributing writer for *Photo District News* and *RangeFinder* magazine.

He has had three books published, beginning with a 10-year retrospective of his work, and a personal favourite of mine, *40 Miles of Bad Road* (2004). The book was published by Stephen Daiter Gallery in Chicago and was created as an exhibition catalogue, but received a wider release in bookshops and museum stores.

Unfortunately the book was not a financial success, so he decided to publish his own books as he went forward. At the time, there were no self-publishing houses and he had little knowledge of how to make a book, but was aware that Lee Friedlander made his own books under the publishing banner Haywire Press and decided to give it a try.

He began his own company, Kabloona Press, and raised the funds to publish his second book, *All My Lies Are True* (2009), by

All pictures © David Carol



Theo and viewer, 2013

selling limited edition books with a signed print at a discounted price. His third release, *This Is Why We Can't Have Nice Things!* (2011), can be best described as a non-book that contains 40 photographs and 14 accompanying text plates in an unbound clear Lucite enclosure.

'I liked the idea you could see the photos inside this little display case,' he says. 'I later realised you could switch the pictures around and it ostensibly becomes a little

frame with the option to change the photo whenever you wanted. I didn't realise this until after I made the thing, but I sometimes say that was the original idea. It never was though. I like to lie about stuff like that.'

Additionally, Café Royal Books is in the midst of releasing a trilogy of small paperback books of Carol's photographs. The first two releases – *Where's the Monkey?* and *Here's the Deal!* – sold out almost immediately

and his final book, *All My Pictures Look the Same!* is scheduled for release during the autumn of 2014. And to top it off, he's currently editing two photography books scheduled for release in 2015 and conducting a lecture series by the Penumbra Foundation of New York City.

His books can be purchased through his website, Photo-eye Books and the International Center for Photography store.

▣ davidcarol.com



Boy with hands, Maine, 2009

EXHIBITIONS USA

CHICAGO

CATHERINE EDELMAN GALLERY

Until 31 January

Sandro Miller:

Malkovich, Malkovich, Malkovich

▣ edelmangallery.com

DENVER

DENVER ART MUSEUM

Until 25 January

Photography & Vision: The Influence of Joyce and Ted Strauss

▣ denverartmuseum.org

FORT WORTH

AMON CARTER MUSEUM

Until 25 January

Meet me at the Trinity: Photographs by Terry Evans

▣ cartermuseum.org

HOUSTON

CATHERINE COUTURIER GALLERY

Until 26 November

Renate Aller

▣ catherinecouturier.com

LOS ANGELES

LOS ANGELES MUSEUM OF ART

Until 22 March

Larry Sultan: Here and Home

▣ lacma.org

PITTSBURGH

CARNEGIE MUSEUM OF ART

Until 2 March

Duane Michals: Collector

▣ cmoa.org

PORTLAND

BLUE SKY GALLERY

Until 31 November

Jared Soares: Small Town Hip Hop

▣ blueskygallery.org

SYRACUSE

LIGHT WORK GALLERY

Until 17 December

Raymond Meeks:

Where Objects Fall Away

▣ lightwork.org

TUCSON

CENTER FOR CREATIVE

PHOTOGRAPHY

Until 4 January

Contemporary Photography from

the Douglas Nielsen Collection

▣ creativephotography.org