

Elaine Fleck interviews photographer Andrew Rowat about his work and his upcoming show this May, “*Crumbled Empire*” at The Elaine Fleck Gallery

EF When did you get interested in photography?

AR When I was 16 it was a tradition in our family that we should receive a ‘big’ gift. I am the youngest of three and both my brother and sister had received cameras for their 16th birthdays. I thought I had made it explicitly clear (or so my recollection goes) to my parents that under no circumstances was I to be given a camera. So, of course, I received a camera.

So for the rest of high school I had a tempestuous relationship with the camera - viewing it as some sort of intrusive figure; and it wasn’t until university that I picked it up in earnest.

And when I did and really started to photograph, I fell in love with the medium. The act of creation in the dark room was what won me over. The fact that a 2 dimensional flat piece of paper would reveal a rich scene with only the cajoling of some light and chemicals was amazing to me. And so I was hooked.

I can’t paint, or draw, or even saw in a particularly straight line, but I do love the physical act of creation. To be able to hold something tangible after having first conceptualized it is a deeply satisfying affair.

So, in summation: I first approached photography with a deep distrust born of an initially unwanted camera. That distrust was overturned, to be replaced instead with a deep love and a journey that I am still on.

EF When did you get interested in telling stories of the Human Condition, via, your photographic images?

AR I’m not sure that I would categorize what I photograph as telling the story of the ‘Human Condition’. I think that would be somewhat presumptuous of me. Instead, my photographs are about the intersection of me and others’ lives. Perhaps all photos live at that intersection, but for me I pick out quirks that make me laugh. Details that inform us a little bit about the people who inhabit these spaces, or have abandoned these spaces; but it is these details that slowly build up the larger picture which informs us of their lives.

EF Tell us about the “Central Asia” photography, Feature Exhibition for the month of May at the Elaine Fleck Gallery?

AR I wanted to visit and document Central Asia mainly for two reasons. Firstly, the ex-Soviet Republics are a part of the world where people are in transition. Transition from a way of life that had been ‘stable’ for decades into a very unknown and uncertain present. There are vestigial parts of the Soviet Union still there which imbue everything from hotels to peoples’ homes. Secondly, I wanted to get off the beaten path a bit. Perhaps every photographer or artist wants to be able to put their own stamp on a project - to have something unique to call their own. And Central Asia is certainly not the ends of the Earth, but it is more out of the way than most places. So that inaccessibility appealed to me.

EF Is there anything else you would like us to know about your work?

AR I am blessed that I get to do what I love and that there is an audience, be they editorial or curatorial, which supports my work. For that I feel very fortunate.



Shower Curtain-Hotel Avesta, Tajikistan, photography



Oven Cupboard-Floor Hotel Aralsk, Kazakhstan, photography

Scotiabank CONTACT
Photography Festival 2012,
Featured Exhibition
“Crumbled Empire” at
The Elaine Fleck Gallery
Opening reception
May 3rd, 6 - 9 pm.
Show runs May 1 - 27, 2012

CURATOR'S CHOICE AWARD WINNER
Pick of the Month for Exhibits May edition of PDN magazine

ANDREW ROWAT

Brooklyn, NY
Shanghai, China

ELAINE FLECK GALLERY REPRESENTED ARTIST