



*John Goodman teaching at Maine Media Workshop, "In Search of the Personal"*

### **An Observation**

*In August 2002, photographer John Goodman taught a class entitled 'In Search of the Personal' at the Maine Photographic Workshops. His assistant, Brad Hamilton, took notes, and by week's end, had shaped those notes into a poem. What follows could perhaps more accurately be described as a collage of Goodman's quotes, meant to reflect the kinetic spirit of Goodman's personal stream of consciousness.*

#### In Search of the Personal (A poem)

by Brad Hamilton after quotes from John Goodman

let's make a mistake in the morning  
let's make some monster compositions so we can stand here tomorrow and blow our brains out  
just put some film through the camera  
take some pictures you wouldn't have taken last week  
don't just do what you've been doing  
try to push forward to break some new ground.

why don't you work it just the way you need to work it  
find a place that for some reason resonates for you  
anything that's gonna make you more like an animal  
that's gonna make you use your intuition  
there's a feeling that goes through the body  
if you open yourself up, you can get there.

photograph where you are  
a lot of people who are lost can't say that, and it's really liberating  
in some respects you need to stumble  
I want to be falling into pictures  
you trip into things and that's where the image is  
you just gotta go with the process

think about something that's gonna make the picture more vital  
tell me: is this a telephone pole?  
it's not just an exercise in texture and light  
it seems to have a presence and a soul  
it's a photograph!  
you felt something! I feel it too.

this is, like, almost a picture  
did you almost feel that? I think it's an almost  
there's a lot of, like, close...close, close, close  
'The photograph waits for the photographer it has chosen.' (Minor said this)  
I'm sure there's a picture here...you're getting something  
especially when you look at it and smile

you've got three places to make pictures from:  
your head, your heart, and your groin  
don't think so much, let the picture do the work  
your real job is staying alive  
if you stay alive, you're gonna eventually make some pictures  
that's a cool, cool job

you need to kind of find the soul  
shoot the shadow and the light and the mystery  
don't tell the whole story, parts of people are great  
just look at something moving and move the other way  
you can have an ill composed, out of control picture and it resonates with people  
ambiguity's really important

photography is a sacred form of expression  
it reaffirms you as a human being  
we're like electrical conductors  
there's some energy buzzin around here  
are these amazing? not necessarily  
is something starting to go on in them? yeh...

there's hope in this picture  
it's not the right person, it's not the right gesture,  
it's not the right legs, it's not the right scene,  
but this can lead to making a really nice photograph  
you need to be conscious of your clues so you can go forward  
if you put them away, you bury yourself.

now we're gonna get you conscious of something else: yourself  
go out and be free and see what you come back with  
you feel cheesy cuz you're not there yet  
we're gonna get you back on the rocks again  
what does that mean? I don't know, but you'll figure it out  
go there, be there, think

light is magic  
costa manos has a three hour window  
I got, like, ten minutes (half my pictures are f2.9 at a tenth!)  
but I love that moment when it's almost over  
this is the man of light all of a sudden! man!  
follow the light, look what it's doing to ya

editing is amazing, sequencing is amazing  
what do you show? what do you keep in the drawer?  
this is a precursor to this, this is related to this  
is related to this is related to this  
can we mix these around a little bit?  
these three are nice...this? maybe no.

this to me is just elegant  
it was fine alone, but now it, like, works  
this is realization...these are pictures!  
if this is inadequate then I think we need to be inadequate  
you know what you're doing, we love this, right?  
this is the dream of the past and it's in black & white

I want you to slam this today  
get up at some ungodly hour, try to do something different  
I want a commitment on this film that you're working  
I want you to dive in the water  
I want you to do the Geronimo thing  
photograph til you cant breathe!

sometime when it's right I want you to do that  
I want you to photograph your guts  
I want you to make a horrible picture  
I'm trying to bring some people around so they become children again  
so what are you gonna do today?  
I want you to blow my mind.