

ANOTHER AMERICA ROBERT WEINGARTEN'S TESTIMONIAL TO THE AMISH

Robert Weingarten's photographs of Amish communities are riveting testaments to the enduring virtues of this religious group's spiritual and bucolic lifestyle. His black-and-white images of the pastoral landscape are in perfect accord with the Amish's profoundly simple faith. In the broad spectrum of photographic grays that exists between the darkest black and the brightest white, this California photographer has eloquently evoked the rich and subtle harmonies of a people who shy from everything modern and worldly while cherishing the traditional, the spiritual, and the teachings of the Bible.

Like the Pilgrims and Puritans, the Amish migrated to America in search of religious freedom; but unlike other denominations, most Amish have retained the plain black dress, the horse-drawn carriages, the manual tools, and the vernacular architecture of their ancestors. They stress personal humility, honor family and community values, and maintain a fairly strict isolation from contemporary society. Amish culture has been primarily based in agriculture, and the larger of their settlements are found in rural areas of Pennsylvania, New York, Ohio, Indiana, Tennessee, Illinois, and Iowa. Largely due to their own proscription against making graven images, the Amish remain unique and unfamiliar, hidden in plain view to our modern world.

Robert Weingarten grew up in Brooklyn where he developed a superb sense of visual design as well as an abiding passion for the art of photography. For the past three years, he has traveled to various Amish communities in search of photographing both picturesque scenery and a rich, unchanging culture. His images are romantic, certainly, but they also respectfully bear witness to a very special way of life – farm houses quietly shrouded in early morning mist, graphic arrays of empty carriages, rustic textures of weathered barns and silos, uniformed young girls attending school, and gravely thoughtful adults at country auctions are just some of the subjects he shares with us. And we are that much richer because of him.

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