

An Important Photograph from 1972

This photograph, which I took in 1972, feels like the seed of my interest in walking around with a camera to discover what I want to photograph. It shows a boy and a girl standing in the sand near the boardwalk in Far Rockaway, New York, where I grew up and was living at the time. The boy holds a dead pigeon.



Children with Dead Pigeon, 1972

I see in the boy's face pride and delight of discovery, expressed with respect; in his hands I see generosity and tenderness. The boy's pigeon is small and ordinary, like the hat George draws while singing "Finishing the Hat" (in Stephen Sondheim's *Sunday in the Park with George*). But the song's last line ("Look, I made a hat, where there never was hat.") communicates to me that whether it's a hat or a pigeon or a photograph we've taken, developed, and printed, it is natural to feel unselfconscious delight and pride in discoveries and accomplishments that might at first glance by others seem simple and small.

In the girl's face, though, I see a skepticism challenging me, the boy, and George to consider whether the photograph, the finding of a dead pigeon, or the drawing of a hat is really such a big deal after all.

Framed and hung only feet from where I write, this photograph still holds a notable resonance for me and represents the day I learned there can be unexpected, stunning moments of discovery when you're out in the street with a camera just blocks from where you live.