

## *Concerning the Impact of Giorgio Morandi's Still-Lives on My Photography*

A simple summary of Morandi's work is that for decades he painted, etched, and drew different groups of ordinary objects -- mostly bottles, bowls, boxes, and vases -- he selected from his vast collection of them.

On my repeated visits to the exhibition where I first saw his work (at the Guggenheim Museum in 1981/82), I was mesmerized. I imagined the delight and intensity he must have experienced in again and again looking at his objects -- staring at them -- studying them -- probably also thinking about them when he wasn't painting them. I was astonished that the small works had such high emotional and intellectual impact and satisfactions. I perceived clarity and elegance of thought in the unfussy way he used oil paint and his other media. I was enthralled by the easy manner in which he moved among concreteness, abstraction, and combinations of both. I felt tenderness emanating from the simplicity of his facture.

Studying Morandi's works more than four decades ago left me with three important ideas that are obvious to me now, and have been for a long time, but were not obvious to me before my first visit to his exhibition. The three are: first, the power and invitation to intimacy that small, thoughtful, well-crafted works can have; second, the idea that black-and-white and color can be equally powerful, but in their own ways; and third, the potential for simple familiar subjects to continue to reveal new riches as they continue to be valued as subjects.

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Soon after the Guggenheim exhibition closed, I began to act on an idea I had had for some time, namely, to pivot away from the career I was pursuing (which involved applying my formal education in chemistry and library science to positions in academia and business) in order to organize my life around my long interest in painting. And although many years later I turned from painting to photography (thanks in part to the seductive influence of photographic software's creative possibilities), the lessons I learned from Morandi's work never left me and in fact became more strongly reflected in my photographs: my favorite subjects are inanimate, everyday sights of the street (which I most often find while walking the same familiar streets of my neighborhood); my prints are relatively small (most images are 8x5- $\frac{1}{3}$  inches on 11x8- $\frac{1}{2}$  paper); I work in both black and white and color; and as Morandi's use of his materials set for me a standard of simple facture, so in my work I aspire to "naturalness" (to the extent that is possible in any photograph) in the look of my prints, despite my often-extensive use of development software.

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