

NEW RELEASE



## Dan Nelken *Till The Cows Come Home*

Texts by Roy Flukinger, Dan Nelken  
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### A unique record of humans and their animals at county fairs across the United States

It still exists: the small family farm with its own traditions, but it is threatened with extinction. In rural communities and at county fairs across the USA, one can still find it. Dan Nelken, in his portraiture, has recorded the essence of these time-honored ways of living and working. In its short week, the county fair celebrates the hard work of the preceding seasons as the year's stresses evaporate in the jubilant atmosphere of this annual event.

Since 2000, Dan Nelken photographed county fairs throughout New York State, drawn by their simplicity, their moments of tranquility amidst the festivity, and their link to the past. Searching to convey the intimacy, rhythm and flow of the essence of a cultural phenomenon that is slowly disappearing.

*Thus Dan Nelken's vision of the county fair is no mere accumulation of people, animals, scenes and events. Far from it. Till the Cows Come Home is one of those rare bodies of work that combines a surface ease of viewing with a passionate depth of character and feeling. If one chooses just to enjoy the subjects, then Nelken's images are seemingly direct and uncomplicated portraits of the participants in some of the hundreds of county fairs that make up American rural life. His vibrant use of color in the square format imagery is combined with the centralized placement of many figures in order to make his subjects emerge from the page with an assured presence of who they are and what role they are playing in each fair.*

*Simultaneously, however, these photographs also possess a depth that is alluring and compassionate. Nelken's county fairs exist on many levels – as entertainment, competition, communication, cel-*

*bration, and crucible of human emotion – but above all they serve to provide us the viewers with a point of focus from which we may be provided with the opportunity to share in some aspect of all these experience. His photographs invite us to become an active part of this process of vision, much as Walt Whitman first noted in a related context over a century earlier: "I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid and self-contained / I stand and look at them long and long."*

*Do so. Look deeper into each photograph, past their record of human faces and animal figures and through their delightful wit or wistful pathos. If you do so, the spirit of these participants and the complexity of the seemingly simple events in which they are engaged will move you.*

– from the text by Roy Flukinger

**Dan Nelken**, a commercial and art photographer based in New York City, studied graphic design before veering into film and photography. His award-winning work has been exhibited, collected, and published in the USA and abroad.

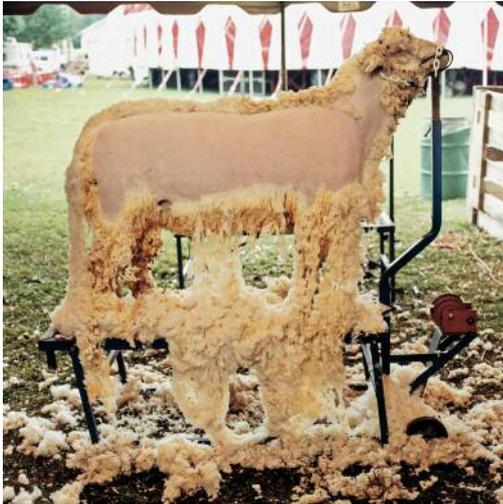
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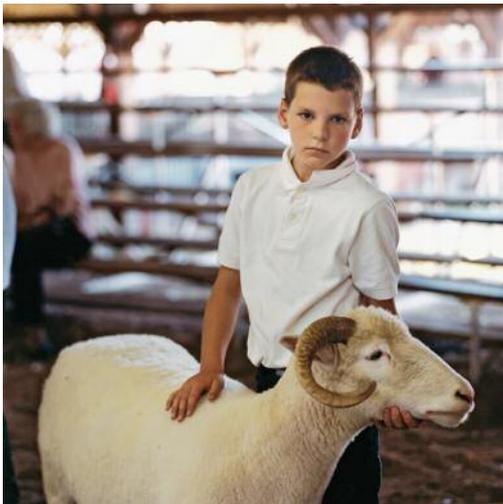
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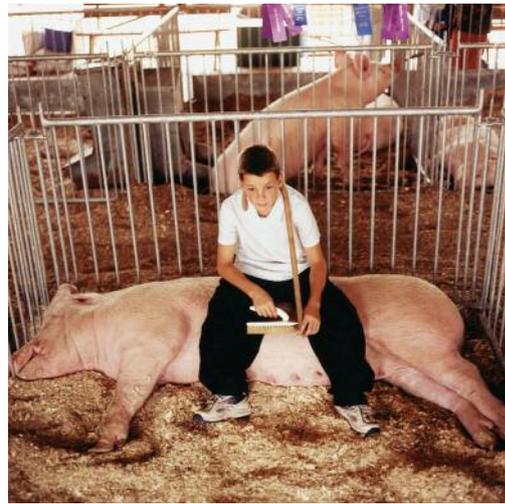
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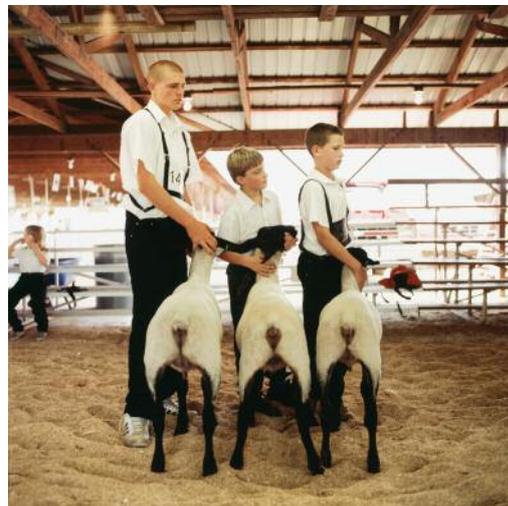
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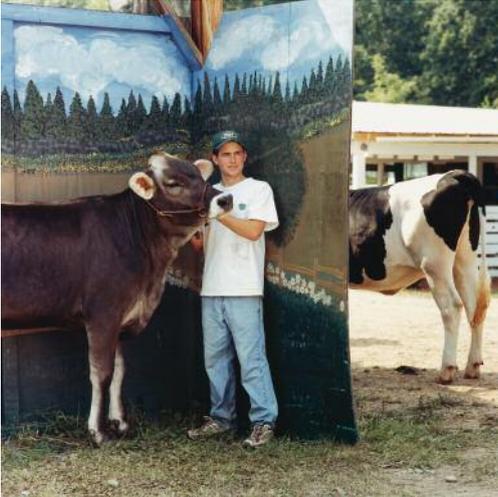
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06 LThe Finalists  
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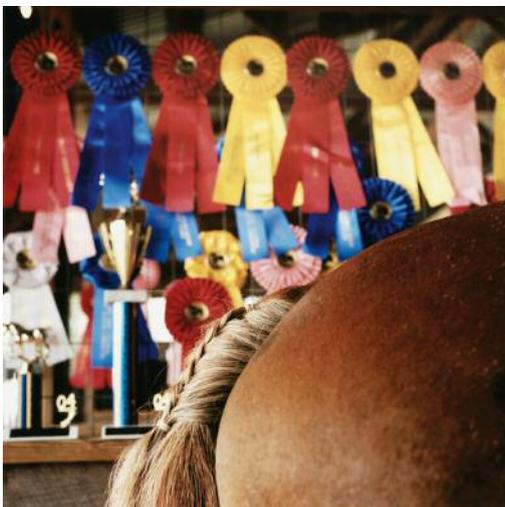
08 Last Years Winners  
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09 Grand Champion Rabbit  
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10 Finally Won  
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11 Draft Horse  
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