

NEW RELEASE 2023

Moa Petersén Eighth Day Wonder – Jerry N. Uelsmann

Text by Moa Petersén
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First biography of Jerry N. Uelsmann, pioneer of inner landscape photo montage

Sometimes I feel that I am on the first page of a personal visual dictionary that I am slowly evolving in an effort to define my own existence.

Jerry Uelsmann, *Random Thoughts on Photography*, 1962

American photographer **Jerry N. Uelsmann** (1934–2022) was a seminal figure in photo history. Uelsmann catalyzed the transfer from modernist to post-modern photography with his at the time controversial photo montages and double exposures. Decades before the birth of digital image editing programs like Photoshop, Uelsmann created photo montages by combining several negatives in the darkroom. He started to create his surreal, spiritual, and thought-provoking images in the late 1950s and continued to produce them, completely analog, throughout his life.

This first biography, written by Swedish photography historian **Moa Petersén** who was a close friend of Uelsmann's, addresses his role as disruptor of the traditional straight photography paradigm and the historical context that shaped him.

Several of the included images are published here for the first time.

From the Introduction by **Moa Petersén**:

The history of photography has been unfair to Jerry Uelsmann, one of the world's most famous photographers of the sixties and seventies. To illustrate once and for all how famous he was, I will begin by saying that he was the fifth most collected photographer in the United States according to the number of his photographs acquired by museums in 1981. He was surpassed only by the giants Ansel Adams, Edward Weston, Walker Evans, and Lewis Hine.¹ Yet, his historical legacy in photography has not received the recogni-

tion it deserves. Jerry told me many times about how, in his youth, he asked a history professor a question after a lecture. Jerry asked, "What is history?" The professor looked at him and slowly said, "History is what we choose to remember."

As a photographer, Jerry was well aware that he had not been chosen to be remembered. The reason for this? Even after writing this book, it is still a mystery to me. This book will not tell you why. However, by telling Jerry's story, I believe it will become clear why it has been unfair to exclude him from the historical discourse on photography.

Jerry overthrew a paradigm, which was the hallmark of his career. This book attempts to tell the story of his life, his work, and how photography became a part of his self-expression. Thus, it simultaneously describes the evolution of US photography in the fifties, sixties, and seventies and describes Jerry's development as an artist and a person during those decades. Jerry was an anomaly within the straight photo and media-specific paradigm that could not be quieted and finally led the way to the revolution. In this book, I do not claim that Jerry was the first or the only one working against a stale and oppressive climate within the photography scene in favor of a larger mediumistic openness. There are examples of American photographers working with double exposures and alternative methods all throughout the twentieth century. However, unlike Jerry, they were isolated and not engaged in organized advocacy for shifts in photographic education. Jerry entered the scene at a point when the revolution was ripe enough to happen on a large scale.

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Barbara Karpf, barbara.karpf@kehrerverlag.com or pr.assistance@kehrerverlag.com

Kehrer Verlag, Mannheimer Str. 175, 69123 Heidelberg, Germany
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Press images



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02_Untitled (1959)
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03_Owl Boy (1959)
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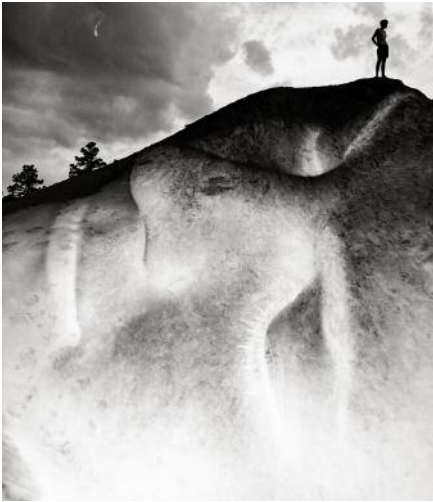
04_Enigmatic Figure (1959)
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05_Self-portrait as Robinson and Rejlander 1964, colored version.
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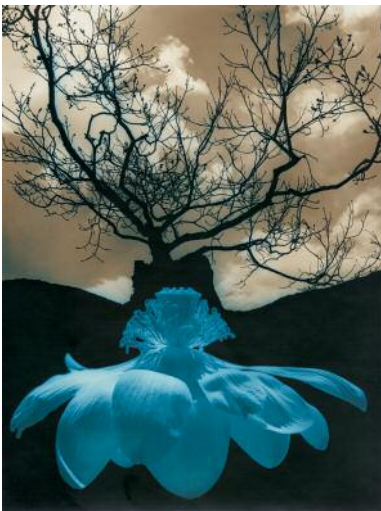
06_Untitled (1963)
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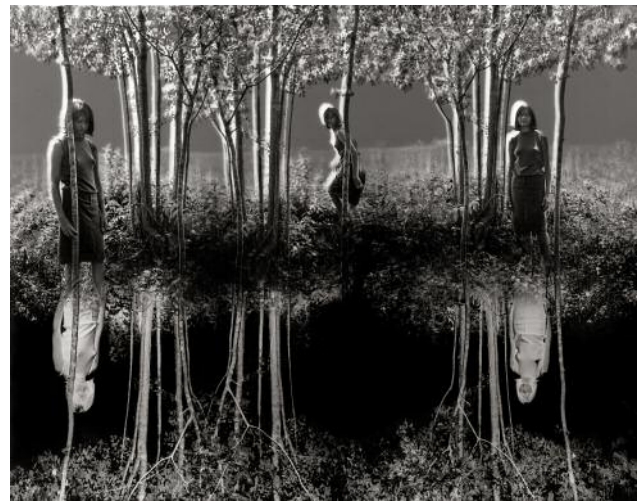
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10_ Small Woods Where I met Myself (1967)
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