

Stone Soup

Eric Ruby

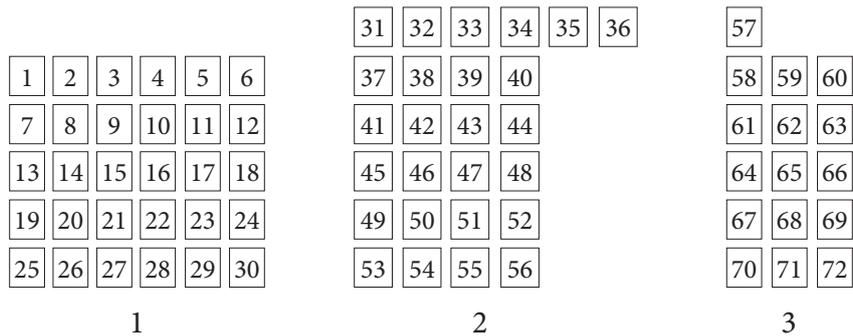
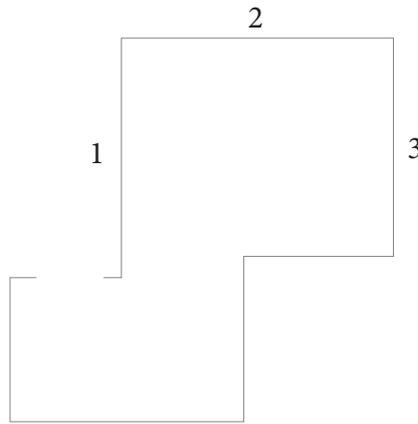
16th May - 21st June 2025

The medium of photography and its community within art contexts has a funny relationship to the vernacular of “discipline.” Its categorical disciples record and interpret the currents of politics, fashion, community— you name it — with what Susan Sontag described as “black boxes,” in order to perform a sort of magicians trick of narration. But the vernacular would elude to a system of beliefs that give meaning to what’s often referred to as a ‘body of work’ in the age of career art. At a cursory glance, Eric Ruby’s discursive images might initially posit what it may mean to have no beliefs. His photographs offer a glimpse into his daily life — a season’s yield from the garden, a visit to a friend’s house, a trip to the beach, or a quiet moment — but on their own these images don’t immediately make evident or efface a certain way of thinking about the world. This is not unintentional, nor without an appreciation for his subjects that are intimately framed. But in their entirety, the mystical and mundane moments reflect an ethos of art making that places lived experience as its intrinsically linked doctrine.

The title for his publication and exhibition derives its namesake from an 18th century folktale, and for him it’s an aspirational one — it eludes to his travels and the people who he gratefully shares time with. In the tale, a hungry traveler arrives in a village carrying nothing but an empty cooking pot and a magic stone. He asks the villagers for food, but they all claim they have nothing to spare. The traveler then announces, “That’s fine, I’ll make stone soup!” He places the large magic stone in his pot, fills it with water, and sets it over a fire in the town square. Curious, the villagers come out to watch. He stirs the pot and tastes the water, saying, “Ah, delicious! Of course, a bit of carrot would make it even better.” One villager, intrigued, runs off and returns with a few carrots to add. The traveler tastes it again. “Mmm, much improved! Now if only we had some potatoes...” Another villager contributes potatoes. Then others bring onions, cabbage, salt, meat, and so on—each person offering a little something. Before long, the whole village is enjoying a delicious, hearty soup—made from nothing but a stone, an openness to the world, and a willingness to share.

Throughout the broad range of places, people, and scenes he encounters, there’s an underlying admiration and adherence to depicting them as natural as possible. Whether it’s a routinely traveled locale or a once in a life-time trip, Eric’s photographs are rarely chance encounters. This usually entails having a chat, or revisiting an introspective moment, where the outcome is a product of spending time with a peculiarity. For Eric, the initial curiosity is equally important as its latent image. Insofar as considering life and art as mirroring experiences — in seeking meaning, creating narratives and finding purpose.

In an idiosyncratic way, *Stone Soup* pieces together photographs from the past decade and presents them collaged on various fabrics from his collection to create a maximalist colourful aesthetic with playful and unexpected visual harmonies. From a technical standpoint, the images hide an incredibly understated understanding of making photographs, a sustainable resourcefulness, and tricky manipulation of light sources throughout. All of these aspects working in tandem allow him to instil cinematic lyricism to the unlikeliest of places. As a backdrop, the collected textiles feel as if they belong to the same realm as his photographs. Together, the collages are a true appreciation for the things, places, and people that he shares a path with — Representing a process of merging of art with life, where meaning is attributed through time, consistency, and care.



All works : Eric Ruby, Archival Pigment Print mounted on Textile, 55 x 46cm or 46 x 55cm respective to orientation

1. Gloucester, Massachusetts, 2016
2. Bakersfield, California, 2022
3. Wrestler, Pacifica, California, 2018
4. Thetford, Vermont, 2014
5. Mark, Limantour Beach, California, 2019
6. Floyd, Oakland, California, 2022
7. Shadow, Folsom, California, 2015
8. Folsom Street Fair, San Francisco, California, 2016
9. Car Seats, Manhattan, New York, 2023
10. Emily with Spoons, New London, Connecticut, 2023
11. Squash, Kelseyville, California, 2020
12. Rolls Royce, Davis, California, 2018
13. Berkeley, California, 2021
14. Bat and Plum, Bolinas, California, 2021
15. Ruby, San Francisco, California, 2021
16. Thank You All, Tomales, California, 2019
17. Tide Pool, Dillon Beach, California, 2020
18. Esther and Cooper, Oakland, California, 2021
19. Bug Spray Flamethrower, Kenai, Alaska, 2017
20. Damien, Black Sands Beach, Marin, California, 2018
21. Chinese New Year, San Francisco, California, 2017
22. Horses, Petaluma, California, 2018
23. Self-Portrait, Los Angeles, California, 2018
24. Amargosa Valley, Nevada, 2017
25. Self-Portrait, San Francisco, California, 2017
26. California and Jones, San Francisco, California, 2016
27. Still life on Gingham, Montara, California, 2017
28. Ashley, Mill Valley, California, 2018
29. Abe, Petaluma, California, 2017
30. Dan Healey's Radio Bench, Woodacre, California, 2019
31. Sunset over Tomales Bay, Dillon Beach, California, 2020
32. Stairs, San Francisco, California, 2014
33. Nicole picking apples, Petrolia, California, 2017
34. Lafayette, California, 2021
35. Plastic Surgery Billboard, Richmond, California, 2021
36. Nicole and __, San Francisco, California, 2017
37. Aubrey, Bolinas, California, 2023
38. Self-Portrait, Tomales, California, 2020
39. Chinatown, San Francisco, California, 2018
40. Juggling, Fort Tilden, Queens, New York, 2017
41. Alameda, California, 2015
42. Sunset, Tomales, California, 2020
43. Annie, Manhattan, New York, 2016
44. San Francisco, California, 2022
45. Federico playing guitar, Portland, Maine, 2021
46. Ginny and Wynnie, Long Prairie, Minnesota, 2021
47. Diesel, San Francisco, California, 2018
48. Brunch, Oakland, California, 2015
49. Mystic Hot Springs, Monroe, Utah, 2018
50. Grandma's Funeral Flowers, South Windsor, Connecticut, 2017
51. Schoolhouse Beach, Bodega Bay, California, 2016
52. Spencer, Kelseyville, California, 2021
53. Robbi, Brittany, and Cyn, Black Sands Beach, Marin, California, 2023
54. Dairy Queen, Bottineau, North Dakota, 2023
55. Ruby, San Francisco, California, 2019
56. River in the American River, Strawberry, California, 2021
57. Chickens in the coop, Kelseyville, California, 2021
58. Eternal Wasteland, Berkeley, California, 2022
59. Bouncer, San Francisco, California, 2019
60. Self-Portrait, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 2023
61. Robbi and Gavi, Tomales, California, 2021
62. Presidio Pet Cemetery, San Francisco, California, 2016
63. Wayne, Maria, and Damien in the Tacoma, Toll Plaza Beach, Oakland, California, 2022
64. Field of Dreams in the kitchen, Southport, Maine, 2017
65. Julien, Kelseyville, California, 2020
66. Candle at Steep Ravine, Marin, California, 2018
67. Self-Portrait, South Windsor, Connecticut, 2023
68. Photos at a nutrition store, Seattle, Washington, 2017
69. Louyuh, Monte Rio, California, 2019
70. Ruby's Peach Pie, Strawberry, California, 2021
71. Maria with hand Shadow at Steep Ravine, Marin, California, 2018
72. Kitchen Table Still Life, Southport, Maine, 2015