Still Life with Avocado
My quest, through the magic of light and shadow, is to isolate, to simplify, and to give emphasis to form with the greatest clarity.

Ruth Bernhard
Stillness is not often practiced in the din of our busy lives these days. Taking time to really look — to see — is a luxury that, for many, has been trampled by the pace of life. This is why I am captivated by the photographic method of “light painting”: this process requires that I take time to explore visual beauty in simple subjects, which has become the underlying theme in all of my projects. For me, the still life is much like macro work: I enjoy the intimate vantage point, full control over the composition and lighting, and the ability to carefully reveal the nuances of color, texture, and most often — beauty.

I've experimented and specialized in the technique of light painting for the past 30 years — learning to reveal subjects in a “different light” so that they can be appreciated in an unexpected way. This light is meticulously applied while making dozens of captures; each capture focusing on a different part of the subject. My process reinforces the notion that discarded objects can have extraordinary beauty. I am especially drawn to objects that are rich in texture and surface quality, often turning to natural subjects. In combining these natural elements with man-made objects, I explore their relationships.

In terms of equipment and preparation, I can say that the camera really isn’t important — although working with a digital capture is far easier than working with film (for obvious reasons). Whether I'm working in my studio or elsewhere, this process is really “all about the light.” My lighting equipment is very minimal and inexpensive: just two light sources and two methods of softening them. To maintain integrity during the process, a sturdy tripod is essential. Although ball heads are wonderful for location work, I prefer a pan-tilt head in the studio; I like being able to control one axis at a time. Also, I'm a big fan of shooting tethered to a computer. Capture software (I use Capture One) is the world’s best light meter!

Over the years I've collected quite a bit of subject matter for my work. The image “Twins” (one of my favorites, on page 47) is of a found object. My wife Vera saw these leaves in our yard, pressed together just as they are in the photograph. Although past their natural life, they are permanently joined; for me, the image symbolizes the permanence of our relationship. The leaves possess a certain spirit that I find enchanting. I hoped to bring this out — so I decided to photograph them floating.

I truly love the mystery and the sense of revelation achieved with light painting. The process involves lighting and capturing each unique piece of the subject, so the image isn’t revealed until the many layers are assembled in Photoshop — where I then begin the work of blending and finessing. Even though I’ve been doing this for many years, I’m still driven by curiosity. Every time I make a picture I’m surprised and delighted to see what is revealed by the light painting process. The most important thing that I’ve learned is that photography can be truly transformative.
There is a joke that your hammer will always find nails to hit.
I find that perfectly acceptable.

Benoit Mandelbrot
Forged
Anvil
Generator, Anselmo Mine
Steam Powered Winch
Painted Steel German Chamber Clock, c. 1625
Brass Weights, Italy, c. 1900
Bearing with Oil Cans
Industrial Blower
Form follows function — that has been misunderstood. Form and function should be one, joined in a spiritual union.

Frank Lloyd Wright
Guillotine Paper Cutter
Piano Workshop Door
Gasparini Street Organ
Piano Workshop Wall
Planer
Assayer’s Office, Anselmo Mine
Lathe Controls
1952 Vincent Black Lightning
Last Chance Garage
Knowledge of the past and of the places of the earth is the ornament and food of the mind of man.

Leonardo da Vinci
Biltmore House
The Family Sitting Room
Anyone who keeps the ability to see beauty never grows old.

Franz Kafka
Burnt Offerings #1
Burnt Offerings #3
Korona Camera
Copper Pot
Twins
My Mother’s Teapot
Green Vase and Walnuts
Pears and Gourd
Eggs and Solvent
Tomatoes and Olive Oil
Crock, Glass Bottle, and Brass Vessels
Teapot and Red Cloth
Teapot and Table
I often think that the night is more alive and more richly colored than the day.

Vincent Van Gogh
Night
Strouds Preserve
Clothesline, Maine
Like so many photographers, Harold was inspired by his father. He explains, “I was quite young when I started going into the darkroom with him, and was amazed to watch the images appear in the developer, seemingly out of nowhere. I couldn’t wait to get my first camera, which I did at age 15.” Harold earned a BFA from Maryland Institute College of Art, in Baltimore in 1978 and found that photography was his way of interacting with the world, as well as how he would earn his living — by making images for advertising. He explains, “That latter part has always represented a huge internal struggle for me. I’ve come to believe that shooting commercially can be a proving ground, but also a barricade.” Harold and his wife Vera live in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, west of Philadelphia, with their two Basenjis, Major and Charlotte.

For additional information please visit Ross’ comprehensive online gallery and website at: www.haroldrossfineart.com/
LensWork Monograph Series

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Monograph #10  Peripheral Vision by Chuck Kimmerle
Monograph #9   The Least Impossible Way by Guy Tal
Monograph #8   Sand, Stone, and Sandstone by Bruce Barnbaum
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Monograph #5   Florilegium by Kim Kauffman
Monograph #4   Chariots of Desire by Huntington Witherill
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