

" One of the most frequent and disturbing influences on the ego...the Shadow... can in large measure be inferred from the contents of the personal unconscious. To become conscious of it involves recognising the dark aspects of the personality as present and real. This act is the essential condition for any kind of self-knowledge, and it therefore, as a role, meets with considerable resistance." C G Jung 1951

artistic photography

As a commercial photographer you are commissioned to work with a certain subject.

Rutherford did so for twelve years in Toronto. "But," he says, "in my spare time I let the camera play on its own, I took shots by mere chance - I thought." However, after studying the photographs he discovered symbols, like dreams, for something he might have unconsciously repressed. "I have found a number of important clues about my Self in these photographs."

Photographers are storytellers: poets in time and by chance. Sifting through fragments of fact and fiction, our photographs are the souvenirs of our encounters with the things we find significant or meaningful in the world around us. When we look at a photograph, we want to know: What is going on in this picture?

Initially, I could not understand why this photograph should affect me so much more powerfully than other...

re? And - what does it mean? "Much more than simply the rational application of method to medium or of aesthetics to form. I believe that our photographs are the records of our own moral code and action, emotional self-portraits with the power to illuminate the dark places within us where we hide - even from ourselves - our greatest fears and desires," says Rutherford. The idea for this series began with "Building and Tree." In the days after he first printed the negative, he tells us, the image literally

haunted him for days and weeks afterwards and he was drawn irresistibly back to look at it again and again. Like many of the photographs he took at the time, the composition included two apparently antagonistic elements; in this case a large, barren tree moves menacingly from left to right across the frame towards a sterile and linear building which appears to recoil in fear.

"Initially, I could not understand why this photograph should affect me so much more powerfully than other. Ostensibly similar photographs taken at the time, until it occurred to me that its hold on my imagination might, like a poem or a dream, have more to do with its symbolic significance than with any aesthetic or artistic merit." Approached from that perspective, he realised that the photograph described clearly but in allegory: "The growing tension between my rational and "right" thinking mind (represented by the organised, linear form of a building) - and its fear of my "sinister" (from Latin meaning "left") unconscious (the tree), a powerful, natural force, which was all the more potent for being denied and repressed," Rutherford explains conti-

nuing: "The discovery that an intelligence so clearly intimate with my deepest fears and anxieties should not only possess the ability to make itself heard - but that it should be able to do so on a subject I had effectively banished from the court of conscious awareness - shook me like a blow. The sensation was akin to the sudden discovery that other people can hear the voices of self-doubt and reproach which rang in my ears."

In a similar composition just a few days later, "Femme Reculée" (see picture) shows a female figure "a symbol for my anima, my unacknowledged 'feminine' side" recoiling from the advance of a dark and ambiguous form.

"As in the previous photograph, this image appeared to describe an aspect of my Self under siege from powerful, malevolent forces beyond my highly-prized conscious control. In many of the photographs subsequently I have come to recognise a number of other insights into the nature of the hopes and fears which drive me, when inexplicably drawn towards (or repelled by) the scene or event before me."

Rutherford believes that his symbol-literate unconscious sees something in the scene which is significant to him and tries, through a kind of intuitive left eye/right brain geiger counter, to find the arrangement of the visual elements which provokes the strongest - emotional response. "My objective is not to record faithfully what is 'out there' - nor to describe what exists 'in here' but to glimpse, to touch and to try to bring home, a symbolic souvenir of the meeting of the two- the ego and the unconscious." Describing a moment in his relationship with the unconscious, his photographs are but a snapshot: a record of the "who I am this moment" and which often includes a clue about the direction



in which this "who wishes to lead him. This way of looking at his photographs has rewarded him with valuable insights from the invisible guide and companion: " This friend who knows me well - and who seems to love me anyway according to the notes he leaves for me with my photographs. I have learned to recognise his voice and to trust what he says."

The tree has become one of the most significant recurrent motifs in his photographs. In their various shapes, situa-

tions and volumes of foliage. " I have begun to explore the Tree as a metaphor describing my relationship with the unconscious (and the life-force it represents) at the time the photograph was taken. Increasingly, the symbols in my photographs include what Jung called "archetypes" drawn from the collective unconscious with the power to speak to the dreaming mind within us all."

Since withdrawing from commercial photography Rutherford's pictures have been exhibited in Canada, France, the United States, Japan and New Zealand. In the Côte d'Azur he has begun to work in colour for the first time since "my daze in commercial photography."

Some of these colour photographs, together with several series in black and white will be shown in an upcoming exhibition in Nice which we look forward to.

LUCIA
PHOTO: RUTHERFORD

EXHIBITION
The Shadow of the Photographer

24 January - 24 February
Espace Magnan
31, rue Louis de Coppet, Nice