

*a*Curator

Thomas Roma & Giancarlo Roma: The Waters of Our Time



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Words by Efrem Zelony-Mindell.

Collaboration between two people can be challenging. Mixing, matching, trying to push a medium - it's difficult. Coming to a deeper understanding through interactions of people

has its rewards. Two plus two isn't always simply just a four. Such is the case with **Thomas Roma** and **Giancarlo Roma's** book *The Waters of Our Time*. The book, out for the first time in hardcover, is irrefutably one of the most rewarding reads I've ever had in one sitting. It sucked me in - I couldn't stop myself. It tugs at you; it's intimate and intrinsic like looking through the family album, listening to your favorite song, and reading that poem you love over and over again because you just can't help yourself. These wonderful men have built a personal backyard for themselves and their readers. The book couples together Thomas' photos - images taken over the course of his entire career - and the words of his mindful son Giancarlo, who was always absorbing and watching. It's inspired by, and an ode to, Roy DeCarava and Langston Hughes' book *The Sweet Flypaper of Life*. Thomas and Giancarlo stress to me how important it is to enter into a conversation with history.

it's pointless.



Just because you hold on tight to something doesn't mean you can keep it from changing. It's like when you see a parent trying to run alongside a carousel to keep their child in sight—



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Both men are inside each other. Chatting with them it became obvious that it's always been that way. They're more than just father and son, and what reads so clearly in their book is that their words and images are meant for everyone. *The Waters of Our Time* holds a universal truth; it's a reflection on finding identity and finding one's own flesh. "It's hard to love someone sometimes. Being a part of each other's successes and failures." It's interesting to watch how Thomas talks to me, and looks over at his son. Thomas didn't originally intend for the words of the book to be written by his son, in fact he'd planned on someone else filling that role. "Giancarlo went to my wife and asked for the layouts. I had no idea." We chuckle over the notion of son asking mother (Anna) for his

father's goods. Thomas has an incredible sense of design in his books; he knows as much about shaping the landscape of a layout as he knows about taking a really great photo. Giancarlo's words flow through the space between the photographs. There is a kind of reverberation in that space and throughout the spreads. Something almost extra sensory is happening and it isn't out of bounds to think of it as a kind of synesthesia.



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Reading through *The Waters of Our Time*, suddenly the reader may realize this isn't purely a visual book, nor is it just words on a page. It's thrilling, and hearing the sounds of this book is inescapable! Giancarlo tells me, "It happened on its own. I locked myself in my room and was totally consumed by writing these words." During our interview I keep taking note of these two hugely talented men's expressions and how they look at each other. It's so important to note that they both seem welled up with huge emotion and love. At some points they're almost crying; it is definitely from joy. The book is a conversation between two people who love and respect each other very deeply, it's more than just the blood they share. Without needing to hear them say it this book reads as one of the most important things either one has done in his life. All the while the words are very aware of the images and the photos support the structure of the story. And then Thomas comes in demonstrably, "I hate all this tribalism in the world today! I want to see people excel without separation! These photos - this book - is for everyone!" Thank you Tom! I don't think there's any better way to put it.



And the school bell is tinkling to the throng
I know it's strange but even still I feel homesick at times,



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like something's missing.



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The Waters of Our Time becomes personal, both in message and in size. It always was about being close to the heart, being pocket sized. It is approachable and almost jaunty in its synergy. There's a somberness to it of course, but it's regenerative in its mission and achievement. The book does something hugely well: it raises consciousness and reminds us that we are all special. Maybe sometimes special just because. It is able to be as complex or as simple as the reader wants it to be. *The Waters of Our Time* is about everyone and that sense of togetherness.

Get your hands on this beautiful book by [clicking here](#).



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At a certain point, you realize you can't recall your own life as neatly as you thought you could.

Bumping into pieces of your past every time you change your route from here to there shuffles everything.



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