

from the RODNEY SMITH *archive*



Reed Leaping Over Rooftop, New York, New York, 2007, 20" x 20", Archival Print

Risky Business

How did model Reed Kelly make this incredible leap across New York City's tall buildings?

Rodney and I did so many different things. It really was just like being shot out of a cannon.

I remember this was a fashion shoot for *New York Magazine* for a story called *Leaps and Bounds*. It was about a man who's extreme, or who's on the edge of fashion. There were a lot of different ways that you could take it.

So we got to the top of this building. It was very high up.

By this point Rodney and I had worked together so often, that I was like, I'm going to go for things, because being a dancer and working with the imagery of my body for so many years, I have an idea of what I think may look good for a photographer.

Rodney was really great about empowering that. And also, he would be very quick to say nope, this isn't working and I loved that as well. He was very decisive and knew it was working or he would move on. He wouldn't belabor something. But this particular shoot, I remember we were doing lots of things like me looking over a ledge and we got some great shots, but finally, I said, "Rodney, what if I jumped from that roof to that roof?" And he replied, "Do you think you can do that?"

And I understood that I could be the naughty one. And then he could say, 'Oh, don't do that.' When at the same time, I know he wanted to get that shot.


So I jumped. And he was like, 'Yeah, I think this will work.'

And he set it up and he framed it in such a way, that when the shot came out, it was like a sleeper photo, an image we weren't expecting. This is because of the way that Rodney created an environment for me. It was always, you do you, and

I'll do me, and we'll make something together.

And now to see it in this context — on the cover of *Leap of Faith*, the retrospective book published by the J. Paul Getty Museum — it's just incredible. I feel so honored to be part of it.

To listen to Paul Martineau's conversation about Reed being forever frozen in the space between leaving and arriving, click [here](#) (courtesy of Maine Media Workshops).



A SMALL
PART *of a*
LONG
STORY

A collection of oral histories from the Rodney Smith archive