

# SIMON ROBERTS

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## QUOTES

“Roberts’ manner is calm. He shows people small in the landscape, clustered into groups rather than isolated as individuals. He likes to shoot from relatively high, so we see patterns. It is partly a show about ritual in the landscape, the strange things we do to feel we belong. It is partly about how the very numbers of us who come to enjoy the land spoil the thing we admire. A strong theme is about movement, but Roberts shrewdly notices how much movement is local. Playing golf still has something pastoral about it, even in the shadow of the very power station which employed you. These elegant pictures invite multiple readings, but they do it with confidence and zest. With flashes of wit, humanity, and abundant respect for his photographic predecessors, Simon Roberts has added a good one to the canon of surveys of the English.”

***Francis Hodgson, Critic, 2011***

“Roberts’ work is significant because he combines a respect for his subject and the desire to communicate important social, economic and political issues, with a contemporary and highly talented approach to image making. His approach is one of creating wide-ranging surveys of our time, which he does through eloquent and arresting photographs.”

***Greg Hobson, Curator of Photographs, National Media Museum, 2011***

“We English, which looks at leisure locations around England from an aerial perspective, is the best new book on England for many years.”

***Martin Parr, Photographer, 2011***

“Roberts travelled around England in a motorhome to produce his large-scale photographs of the English at rest and play. The results are epic vistas captured from a distance that are both timeless and contemporary.”

***Sean O’Hagan, The Observer, 2011***

“The methodology the artist makes use of distinguishes his whole body of research. It consists of a lengthy period of observation with an eye to the relational aspects of the process of building up the image, meaning that rather than being the result of a single point of view, it is more the synthesis of individual stories and widespread sentiments that blend together and give life to a spatial representation, both intimate and rigorous.”

***Daria Filardo, Curator, 2010***

“I think Roberts is more like a painter with an easel, with his large plate camera. He appears more akin to a much more traditional, long term, carefully composed form of representation.”

***Stephen Daniels, Professor of Cultural Geography/ University of Nottingham, 2010***

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“*We English* is a complex body of work – photographically simple in one sense, but imagistically complicated, with many different inferences, not all of them immediately appearance, so one can be grateful for the book’s size, which enables one to see much of the detail in the pictures. Whether it can be considered as art or documentary, I don’t care – the so-called painterly aspects of the work interest me the least. What does interest me is that Simon Roberts has produce an intelligent and persuasive vision of our contemporary English mores – a Tony Ray-Jones for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”

**Gerry Badger, *Ag Magazine*, 2010**

“Quite simply, the images are beautiful, though perhaps not immediately revealing - their beauty can encourage the clumsy habit of overlooking what they contain. The best of these photographs are remarkable in the layers that Roberts's has managed to capture - environment, group and individual. And truly the three inform and shape the others.”

**Sarah Bradley, *Photo-Eye Magazine*, 2010**

“True to his word, Roberts’ pictures are unmistakably his own. Photographed in colour with a tripod-mounted 5 x 4 plate camera, they exhibit a disciplined compositional restraint, a richness of palette, and – often – a wealth of narrative incident.....His intent to mine the country’s overlooked moments – the trivial and the quotidian – is made good.”

**Guy Lane, *The Art Book*, 2010**

“*We English*, the title of Roberts’s engrossing exhibition of large-scale color photographs might lead you to expect gently satiric social studies in the style of Martin Parr. But the focus of the work is primarily landscape, and several of the images are broad, handsome vistas with only a few people scattered about the terrain. Even the photographs that include larger groups were taken from a distance—a perspective that echoes classical painting, although the subjects are decidedly contemporary.”

**Vince Aletti, *The New Yorker*, 2009**

“For Roberts, landscape is a site of leisure pursuits, and this viewpoint fits well with both contemporary social thought and the consumption-obsessed imagery of much current documentary. But he manages somehow to allow the sublime beauty of many of these settings through, and to make pictures of lasting quality.”

**Peter Hamilton, *British Journal of Photography*, 2009**

“With a Simon Roberts it is a case of the more you look, the more you see. *We English* has tremendous historical and anthropological interest; it takes us on an amazing journey through ideas of belonging and memory, identity and place. It is one of the those rare books than you can and will come back to time and time again.”

**Tim Clark, *1000 Words Magazine*, 2009**

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“Roberts’ photographs are indeed beautiful. The light is often luminous, the colour rich and intense.....The pictures are sumptuous.”

*Jane Fletcher, Source, 2009*

“This empathic and captivating collection of photographs [*Motherland*], which combines intimate portraits and expansive landscapes, coalesces into a picture of post-Soviet Russia that is more complex and optimistic than clichéd portrayals of poverty in the wake of communism. Offering equal measures of beauty and disorder, pride and melancholy, the images speak to feelings of belonging and a common spirit amidst evident diversity.”

*Karen Irvine, Curator, Museum of Contemporary Photography Chicago, 2008*

“*Motherland* is a beautifully resolved body of work and the pervading air of melancholy, so suited the subject. The editing together of landscapes and figure studies work powerfully together – and Simon’s eye for the special detail that lifts a picture above a record to become a kind of poetry is evident in every image.”

*Martin Barnes, Curator of Photographs, V&A, 2007*

“Because the photographs in *Motherland* depict a nation that is alien to most of us, you could almost begin to convince yourself that the scenes are, in fact, elaborately constructed film sets. The landscapes have an air of suspension about them, rather like the split second before a film director calls ‘Action’, while the portraits – as formal and static in nature as they are – have a connection between both photographer and subject seen all too rarely these days. There are echoes of August Sander about these.”

*Ailsa McWhinnie, Outdoor Photography, 2007*

“Simon Roberts wants to break down the stereotypes that own you...His journey through Russia is one of liberation, not exploitation...it is a journey to uncover truth and dignity, timelessness and respect...rather than magnify crime or inflate historical myth. It is a vision speaking of majesty, community and grace, not vice, guns and titillation. He would like to take the epic land that is ‘Russia’ and make it intimate...reel it in and soften it...let you see the beauty and hope, not the suffering and pain. Simon deals in optimism and humanity, not tragedy, corruption and misery.”

*Doug Rickard, American Suburb X, 2007*

“In the new documentary mode objectivity is almost invariably melded with desire. The photographs of Britain's Simon Roberts from his series *Motherland* are, paradoxically, both bleak and raw and yet almost distressingly pleasing to the eye.”

*Gary Michael Dault, Critic, 2007*