

 The Sea Ranch

# SOUNDINGS

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*View With a Room  
by Arthur Drooker*



# Photographer Arthur Drooker re-envisions *light on the land*

George Calys

"When I was 15, all my friends were getting guitars because they thought they'd attract girls. I had a little Kodak Retina pocket camera that I carried everywhere. Forty years later, only a few kept up with the guitar but I'm still making photographs." That teenage choice was Sea Rancher Arthur Drooker's path toward becoming a serious, professional photographer.

Drooker's sojourn wasn't a straight line, however.

Growing up in the Bronx, Drooker relocated to Southern California in 1978. His dream was to break into film and television and Los Angeles seemed like the logical place to start. He landed a job with NBC, not behind a camera, but in the mail room! With continued application, though, Drooker moved up to editorial assistant with NBC News and then to promotional producer. Those experiences led him to producing documentaries for local station KABC and cable channels A&E and the History Channel.

By 2004, Drooker was burnt out in the television world. "TV no longer made me happy," he reflected, "but photography did." With that, he left documentary filmmaking and began working as a full-time photographer. "My income that first year dropped," he remembered, "but I was never happier."

Little did Drooker know that by 2010, another level of happiness would arrive. That was when he randomly reconnected through Facebook with a long out-of-touch friend Ivy Ross, who grew up three blocks away from Drooker in the Bronx. A relationship developed, they traveled back and forth between Los Angeles and New York, and they were married in 2011. Two years ago, they purchased a home at The Sea Ranch and now split their time between here and a Mill Valley home.

"Something clicked," Drooker stated in an unintended pun, "the sense of creative power in photography captivated me." In what could only be called an energetic burst between 2007 and 2021, Drooker produced seven books of his photography, beginning with *American Ruins*, a collection of infrared photographs of little-known historic ruins in America. His most recent book, *City Hall*, chronologically traces architecturally significant city halls across the United States.

Currently, Drooker is training his photographic eye on the buildings and landscape of The Sea Ranch in a portfolio he has named *Light on the Land*. His black



*Tree of Light. Photo by Arthur Drooker*


**"On a hike at The Sea Ranch, I was stopped in my tracks by shafts of sunlight boring through a tangle of tree branches and forming pools of light on the ground. The sight was so powerful, even sacred, that the next day, I returned to the same spot, at the same time, with camera in hand, and made the photograph *Tree of Light*."**

*Arthur Drooker*

# Photographer Arthur Drooker

and white images evoke the memory of Merg Ross whose well-known photographs in the 1960s and '70s popularized the architectural design of The Sea Ranch. Drooker, however, has not replicated Ross' work; he has chosen to frame the narrow aspects of a subject instead of portraying an expansive, grand image. His photographic style emphasizes very high contrast—deep black and brilliant white with a few greys. The effect is a dramatic portrayal of a

building detail or a single element of a landscape. The *Light on the Land* images will be offered in an upcoming book later this year.

Drooker's photography will be showcased at the LyndonDesign Gallery (1000 Annapolis) on November 6 and 13. His portfolios and books can be viewed online at [www.arthurdrooker.com](http://www.arthurdrooker.com). 



(left) Barn Interior and (above) Laps from the *Light on the Land* series.  
*Photos by Arthur Drooker*